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LIFE AND FATE

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by Melinda Camber Porter

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Death of Socialism

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Nicaraguan Myths

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The Family As History

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Gideon Telpaz
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Poetry
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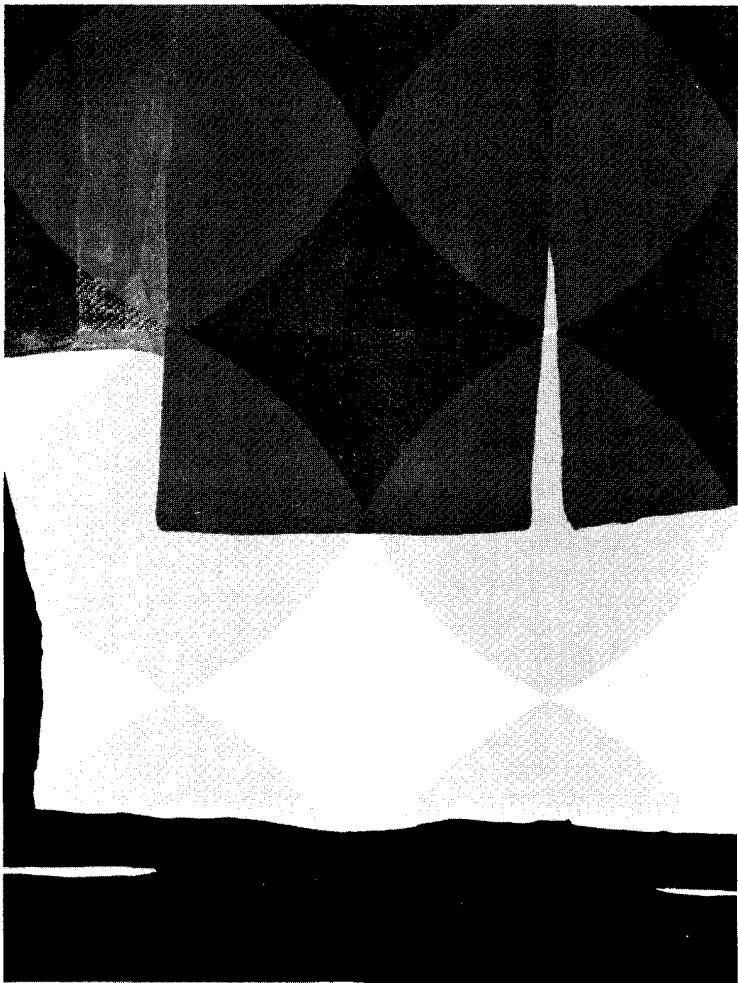
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COMMENT

NOTES ON THE DEATH OF SOCIALISM AND OTHER MATTERS.

In his contribution to the fortieth anniversary issue of *Commentary*, Lionel Abel makes an interesting observation. He says that it is possible to criticize the politics of a nation, but that to criticize the nation makes no sense. Abel of course is right, unless we grant any validity to such fundamental criticism of America and Western Europe as is being made from a Marxist or socialist perspective, that is, if one totally rejects democratic capitalism in favor of a socialist vision of society. And this, indeed, has been the basis for the rejection of American and European society, though this rejection today is largely unaware of its ideological sources. Nor does it seem to recognize that the Marxist and socialist outlooks are themselves questionable.

Kierkegaard once said that we begin to die the moment we are born. This seems to be true also of the ideal of socialism, which began to be extinguished as soon as the Bolshevik revolution took place, though many of us did not realize it until much later. Although there is no way of proving that a socialist revolution in the future will not produce a free and just society, neither is there any logical or historical ground for believing that it will. As Irving Howe has written recently in *Dissent*, a belief in socialism is largely an act of faith and an expression of the will to keep alive one's passion for social justice. For not only has the Soviet Union betrayed its own revolution, it has stymied or corrupted other independent socialist movements.

But there is another serious consideration—a practical rather than theoretical one—that precludes the pursuit of socialist politics. What I have in mind is the indifference to the fate of one's nation implicit in the antinational outlook of Marxism and socialism. Perhaps this position did not have serious consequences when no one country was favored. But in the contest between America and Russia that occupies a central place in the politics of the world, to be indifferent to America's fate is, at least objectively or unconsciously, to play into the hands of the Soviet Union. Indeed, most people who are not under the influence of some radical critique of capitalist society take for granted that America and the West should be defended against either right or left totalitarianism.

If I seem to be dismissing the socialist dream too easily, as though it were only a matter of political logic, it is because I am countering the views of those who hold on to socialist beliefs without

realizing the difficulty of reconciling these beliefs with current political realities. After all, the socialist vision has been the dominant faith of the modern era — and perhaps the last one. And its death has left a moral vacuum in contemporary society — as did the death of God earlier. This is probably why so many former socialists cling to their original beliefs, in the face of all the failures to implement the idea of socialism and all the barbarities committed in its name. One of my fellow editors, for example, was aware, as early as the thirties, of the betrayal of socialism by the Stalinists, but a few years before his death in 1973, he said he did not want to abandon the idealism of his youth. Naturally, no one wants to abandon the exuberant ideas of his youth. And I recall my vow when I was questioning the accepted wisdom of my elders that I would not like to harden into the kind of cynicism exhibited by older people who scoffed at my youthful enthusiasms and could not wait until I grew out of them. Nevertheless, reality has a way of superseding either the will to believe or the will to disbelieve. In any case, all that my colleague's radical rejuvenation came to was an exaggerated sympathy with the worst aspects of new left politics, although he could not get himself to accept the cultural primitivism that went along with it.

So here we are at the end of the century, a civilization without a belief in progress or a social ideal to work for — and to give a moral meaning, as religion once did, to existence. This is difficult for young people, especially for the more sophisticated and restless of the younger generation, who are not always content to be prosperous and happy.

Conservatives argue that it is better to defend the moral and material possessions you have than to dream — often counterproductively — of some imaginary paradise in the future. Unfortunately, many people find it difficult to give up their dreams without giving up their responsibilities.

But there are other, perhaps more serious results not so much from the loss of faith as from the loss of the possibility of a rational faith. One of the most disturbing consequences is the splintering of Utopian ideals into a variety of narrow causes that, in the absence of some central vision, take on the extremist quality of cults. And it is significant that these causes that sport an air of rebellion soon become chic and, far from threatening the social order, are taken up by the establishment itself.

It is also interesting to note that where social-democratic parties flourish, the liberation cults play a secondary political role. But social

democracy is itself a hybrid that must be distinguished from classic socialist and Marxist movements. For social democracy, while seemingly keeping alive the principle of socialism, is actually a species of welfare statism, with a few traditional socialist programs thrown in occasionally and often temporarily — but always within the framework of capitalism. This is why social democrats in France, for instance, find no conflict between their party doctrines and the idea of defending capitalist France against its military and ideological enemies. In other countries, however, as in Germany, the social democrats are floundering on the question of national defense, though they, too, do not advocate revolution to overthrow the existing system.

In any event, the breakdown of one belief and the emergence of another in the past produced staggering political contradictions and intellectual confusions. Today, however, the absence of any idea of the future leads to intellectual nihilism and a political accommodation that passes for pragmatism.

* * *

The piece in this issue by Ronald Radosh on Nicaragua illustrates some of the problems of maintaining one's political balance. Radosh provides an impressive account of left-liberal apologetics, some innocent, some disingenuous, for the Nicaraguan regime. And the political lesson that comes through very clearly is that the innocents cannot give up their socialist faith, while the communists shrewdly exploit this reluctance.

But Radosh ends up in a contradiction, which stems, I believe, from his own lingering left beliefs. For even though Radosh demonstrates the complete untrustworthiness of Nicaragua in living up to its promises, he concludes by advocating some kind of deal whereby the Sandinistas would promise not to support communist revolts elsewhere in Central America. And he takes this position, I think, because he cannot repudiate completely the left view that American intervention — economic and political as well as military — would represent a greater evil than does the Nicaraguan regime. He also slurs over the question of whether it is moral not to oppose the immorality of the Sandinistas. I say this not to take anything away from Radosh's penetrating exposé of the pro-Nicaraguan mentality, but to indicate the dilemmas of left or socialist anticommunists.

* * *

The November 21, 1985 issue of *The New York Review of Books* has a brilliant piece by Václav Havel, the Czech writer, on the political stupidity and bad faith of the peace movement. It is most im-

pressive in its subtlety and sophistication, the absence of overheated polemics, and the freedom from ideological cant. There is a kind of purity of thinking that, by comparison, makes one ashamed of the inability of so many intellectuals in the West, some of whom one counts among one's friends, to understand the issues.

What Havel says is not particularly original. But originality is scarcely required to reply to disingenuous and sloganized politics. Havel points out, for example, what every schoolchild should know: that wars are the result not of arms but of fundamental conflicts of interest, and that the peace propaganda of the Soviet Union, a nation waging a brutal war in Afghanistan and intervening in other areas, cannot be taken seriously. He also is quietly dismissive of peace movements that are selective in their attitudes toward different countries and different questions. His most telling observation is that a country which enslaves its own people and those of its neighbors cannot be relied on to keep the peace. In fact, it is not peaceful, though it peddles the rhetoric of peace as part of its propaganda.

I find it hard to believe that in political matters Czech—or Polish—intellectuals natively are so much more clear-headed than American ones. If it is not in their natures, so to speak, then it must come from the experience of being too close to the Russians and of being deprived of their freedom by them. Should this be true, it is a high price to pay for the ability to see things as they really are. But maybe this is the sad lesson of our time.

* * *

As I write this, Reagan and Gorbachev are going into what is ostentatiously called the summit, which is actually a public relations ploy for both sides. The Russians, I assume, know what they want: to get as many concessions as they can out of us, particularly for us to cut down on the nuclear defense program, with themselves giving up nothing, while pursuing their propaganda war by accusing us of warlike aims and measures. But why is there so much confusion about American policy both in the media and by our government spokesmen? Is it the lack of clarity by our government, or an attempt to soothe public opinion by pretending that we do not know what the Russians want and that we will be bargaining in good faith? I suspect it is a bit of both. The result is to spread an air of mystery about Russian intentions and goals. We have become so accustomed to thinking of the left as being confused and soft on communism, that we tend to overlook the political blindness and opportunism of the right, which is made up of a conglomeration of conflicting ideas and inter-

ests. Also, conservative governments have to appease their constituencies, which often have been led to think war can be averted if we take a more benign view of the Russians—though, presumably, the President knows better. And they are often no clearer in formulating or pursuing their aims than the liberals or the left. How else explain the fact that there actually has been very little difference between the main lines of the foreign policies of the Nixon, the Carter, and the Eisenhower administrations? The difference has been mainly in their rhetoric—and in small matters. And when rhetoric in foreign affairs outreaches action, then we deceive ourselves, not our adversaries.

* * *

There is an enormous body of writing on the subject of literature and psychoanalysis, most of it bad, some good. I have read much of this material, and I even have added to it my own observations on the relation between the creative and the psychological. I also have edited—and co-edited with Edith Kurzweil—other studies in the field. But not until recently has it occurred to me that the question of the relation has not been posed properly. As everyone knows, if you ask the wrong question, you get the wrong answer.

It suddenly seemed obvious to me that psychoanalytic criticism is a method that has to be related to other critical methods, not directly to literature. It is like asking about the relation of psychoanalytic criticism to science. It has been argued—quite persuasively—that the major themes of human existence, which have been uncovered by Freud, such as the Oedipus complex, have supplied the thematic material for a number of major works. But psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic critics have been able to relate this observation to the quality of a work or to its other meanings, though some light has been cast on certain aspects of literature, usually on the explicit “content.” However, such an exercise is actually a somewhat more specific application of the truism that life is related to art. Only in rare cases have psychoanalytic critics integrated the more sophisticated approaches of modern criticism into their own thinking.

As a result, we still do not have a clear idea of the relation of literature to psychoanalysis beyond the now accepted idea that the psychological drives that form the basis of psychoanalytic theory play a prominent role in the major texts of Western literature.

The reason, I believe, for this lack of clarity is that the question should have been posed as the relation of psychoanalysis to literary criticism. For if the findings of psychoanalysis are to be applied to literature, they must be related to the methods of understanding and

analysis developed by modern criticism. In fact, psychoanalytic criticism cannot be pursued as a different critical approach, one that is autonomous and self-sufficient. When it is so employed, outside the field of criticism and by people unaware of its history, psychoanalytic literary analysis usually assumes the more banal critical ideas current at the time, and is quite unsophisticated both in its approach and in its conclusions.

It might appear that deconstructionist critics who use psychoanalysis are relating it to modern criticism, because they are concerned with literary theory. But their method actually is quite narrow: it consists mainly of a mingling of psychoanalytic ideas with a reconstruction of the text. Someone like Lacan, on the other hand, though influenced by deconstruction and linguistics, interprets literary texts in much the same manner as earlier orthodox psychoanalytic critics.

What I am suggesting is that psychoanalytic critics should know as much about literary criticism as they expect literary critics to know about psychoanalysis. It might then be discovered that the role of psychoanalysis is not to invent a new mode of criticism but to add to the knowledge that is brought to the critical reading of literature.

W.P.

FICTION

Vasily Grossman

LIFE AND FATE

Mikhail Mostovskoy was kept for over three weeks in the isolation ward. He was fed well, examined twice by an SS doctor, and prescribed injections of glucose.

During his first hours of confinement Mostovskoy expected to be summoned for interrogation at any moment. He felt constantly irritated with himself. Why had he talked with Ikonnikov? That holy fool had betrayed him, planting compromising papers on him just before a search.

The days passed and Mostovskoy still wasn't summoned. . . . He went over the conversations he had had with the other prisoners about politics, wondering which of them he could recruit. At night, when he couldn't sleep, he composed a text for some leaflets and began compiling a camp phrase-book to facilitate communication between the different nationalities.

He remembered the old laws of conspiracy, intended to exclude the possibility of a total débâcle if an agent provocateur should denounce them.

Mostovskoy wanted to question Yershov and Osipov about the immediate aims of the organization. He was confident that he would be able to overcome Osipov's prejudice against Yershov.

Chernetsov, who hated Bolshevism and yet longed for the victory of the Red Army, seemed a pathetic figure. Now Mostovskoy felt quite calm about the prospect of his impending interrogation.

One night Mostovskoy had a heart attack. He lay there with his head against the wall, feeling the agony of a man left to die in a prison. For a while the pain made him lose consciousness. Then he came to. The pain had lessened, but his chest, his face and the palms of his hands were all covered in sweat. His thoughts took on a deceptive clarity.

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His conversation about evil with the Italian priest became confused with a number of different memories: with the happiness he had felt as a boy when it had suddenly begun to pour with rain and he had rushed into the room where his mother was sewing; with his wife's bright eyes, wet with tears, when she had come to visit him at the time he was in exile by the Yenisey; with pale Dzerzhinsky whom he had once asked at a Party conference about the fate of a young and very kind Social Revolutionary. "Shot," Dzerzhinsky had answered . . . Major Kirillov's gloomy eyes . . . Draped in a sheet, the corpse of his friend was being dragged along on a sledge—he had refused to accept his offer of help during the siege of Leningrad.

A boy's dreamy head and its mop of hair . . . And now this large bald skull pressed against these rough boards.

These distant memories drifted away. Everything became flatter and lost its color. He seemed to be sinking into cold water. He fell asleep—to wake up to the howl of sirens in the early-morning gloom.

In the afternoon he was taken to the sick-bay bath. He sighed as he examined his arms and his hollow chest. "Yes, old age is here to stay," he thought to himself.

The guard, who was rolling a cigarette between his fingers, went out for a moment, and the narrow-shouldered, pock-marked prisoner who had been mopping the cement floor sidled over to Mostovskoy.

"Yershov ordered me to tell you the news. The German offensive in Stalingrad has been beaten off. The major told me to tell you that everything is in order. And he wants you to write a leaflet and pass it on when you have your next bath."

Mostovskoy wanted to say that he didn't have a pencil and paper, but just then the guard came in.

As he was getting dressed, Mostovskoy felt a small parcel in his pocket. It contained ten sugar lumps, some bacon fat wrapped up in a piece of rag, some white paper and a pencil stub. He felt a sudden happiness. What more could he want? How fortunate he was not to have his life drawing to an end in trivial anxieties about indigestion, heart attacks and sclerosis.

He clasped the sugar lumps and the pencil to his breast.

That night he was taken out of the sick-bay by an SS sergeant. Gusts of cold wind blew into his face. He looked round at the sleeping barracks and said to himself: "Don't worry, lads. You can sleep in peace. Comrade Mostovskoy's got strong nerves—he won't give in."

They went through the doors of the administration building.

Here, instead of the stench of ammonia, there was a cool smell of tobacco. Mostovskoy noticed a half-smoked cigarette on the floor and wanted to pick it up.

They climbed up to the second floor. The guard ordered Mostovskoy to wipe his boots on the mat and did so himself at great length. Mostovskoy was out of breath from climbing the stairs. He tried to control his breathing.

They set off down a strip of carpet that ran down the corridor. The lamps—small, semi-transparent tulips—gave a warm, calm light. They walked past a polished door with a small board saying “Kommandant” and stopped in front of another door with a board saying “Obersturmbannführer Liss.”

Mostovskoy had heard the name “Liss” many times: he was Himmler’s representative in the camp administration. Mostovskoy was quite amused: General Gudz had been annoyed that he had only been interrogated by one of Liss’s assistants while Osipov had been interrogated by Liss himself. Gudz had seen this as a slight to the military command.

Osipov had said that Liss had interrogated him without an interpreter; he was a German from Riga with a good knowledge of Russian.

A young officer came out, said a few words to the guard and let Mostovskoy into the office. He left the door open.

The office was almost empty. The floor was carpeted. There was a vase of flowers on the table and a picture on the wall: peasant houses by the edge of a forest, with red tiled roofs.

Mostovskoy thought it was like being in the office of the director of a slaughterhouse. Not far away were dying animals, steaming entrails and people being spattered with blood, but the office itself was peaceful and softly carpeted—only the black telephone on the desk served to remind you of the world outside.

Enemy! That word was so clear and simple. Once again he thought of Chernetsov—what a wretched fate during this time of *Sturm und Drang*! Though he did wear kid gloves . . . Mostovskoy glanced at his own hands, his own fingers.

The door opened at the far end of the office. There was a creak from the door into the corridor—the orderly must have shut it as he saw Liss come in.

Mostovskoy stood there and frowned.

“Good evening!” said the quiet voice of a short man with SS insignia on the sleeves of his grey uniform.

There was nothing repulsive about Liss’s face, and for that very

reason Mostovskoy found it terrible to look at. He had a snub nose, alert dark grey eyes, a high forehead and thin pale cheeks that made him look industrious and ascetic.

Liss waited while Mostovskoy cleared his throat and then said: "I'd like to talk to you."

"But I don't want to talk to you," answered Mostovskoy. He looked sideways into the far corner, waiting for Liss's assistants, the torturers, to emerge and give him a blow on the ear.

"I quite understand," said Liss. "Sit down."

He seated Mostovskoy in the armchair and then sat down next to him.

Liss spoke in the lifeless, ash-cold language of a popular scientific pamphlet.

"Are you feeling unwell?"

Mostovskoy shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"Yes, yes, I know. I sent the doctor to you and he told me. I've disturbed you in the middle of the night. But I want to talk to you very badly."

"Oh yes," thought Mostovskoy.

"I've been summoned for interrogation," he said out loud. "There's nothing for us to talk about."

"Why do you say that?" asked Liss. "All you see is my uniform. But I wasn't born in it. The Führer and the Party command; the rank and file obey. I was always a theoretician. I'm a Party member, but my real interest lies in questions of history and philosophy. Surely not all the officers in your NKVD love the Lubyanka?"

Mostovskoy watched Liss's face carefully. He thought for a moment that this pale face with the high forehead should be drawn at the very bottom of the tree of evolution; from there evolution would progress towards hairy Neanderthal man.

"If the Central Committee orders you to step up the work of the Cheka, are you in a position to refuse? You put Hegel aside and get working. Well, we've had to put Hegel aside too."

Mostovskoy glanced at Liss. Pronounced by unclean lips, the name of Hegel sounded strange and blasphemous . . . A dangerous, experienced thief had come up to him in a crowded tram and started a conversation. He wasn't going to listen, he was just going to watch the thief's hands—any minute now a razor might flash out and slash him across the eyes.

But Liss just lifted up the palms of his hands, looked at them and said: "Our hands are like yours. They love great work and they're not afraid of dirt."

Mostovskoy frowned deeply: it was horrible to see this gesture, and hear these words that so exactly mimicked his own.

Liss began to speak quickly and with enthusiasm, as though he had talked to Mostovskoy before and was glad to have the opportunity to resume the conversation. The things he said were amazing — terrible and absurd.

“When we look one another in the face, we’re neither of us just looking at a face we hate — no, we’re gazing into a mirror. That’s the tragedy of our age. Do you really not recognize yourselves in us — yourselves and the strength of your will? Isn’t it true that for you too the world *is* your will? Is there anything that can make *you* waver?”

His face moved closer to Mostovskoy’s.

“Do you understand me? I don’t know Russian well, but I very much want you to understand me. You may think you hate us, but what you really hate is yourselves — yourselves in us. It’s terrible, isn’t it? Do you understand me?”

Mostovskoy decided to remain silent. He musn’t let Liss draw him into conversation.

But he did think for a moment that, rather than trying to deceive him, the man looking into his eyes was searching for words quite earnestly and sincerely. It was as though he were complaining, asking Mostovskoy to help him make sense of something that tormented him.

It was agonizing. It was as though someone had stuck a needle into Mostovskoy’s heart.

“Do you understand me?” Liss repeated, already too excited even to see Mostovskoy. “When we strike a blow against your army, it’s ourselves that we hit. Our tanks didn’t only break through your defenses — they broke through our own defenses at the same time. The tracks of our tanks are crushing German National Socialism. It’s terrible — it’s like committing suicide in one’s sleep. And it might well end tragically for us. Do you understand? Yes, even if we win! As victors we would be left on our own — without you — in a world that is alien to us, a world that hates us.”

It would have been easy enough to refute all this. Liss’s eyes had now drawn still closer to Mostovskoy’s. But there was something even more dangerous than the words of this experienced SS provocateur. It was what stirred in Mostovskoy’s own soul — his own vile, filthy doubts.

He was like a man afraid of an illness — of some malignant tumor — who won’t go near a doctor, tries not to notice his indispositions and avoids talking about sickness with anyone close to him.

And then suddenly someone comes up to him and says: "Say, have you ever had such and such a pain, especially in the mornings, usually after . . . Yes, yes . . ."

"Do you understand me, teacher?" asked Liss. "A certain German—I'm sure you know his brilliant work—once said that Napoleon's tragedy was that he embodied the soul of England and yet in England herself found his most deadly foe."

"If only they'd start beating me up!" thought Mostovskoy. And then: "Ah, now he's on about Spengler."

Liss lit a cigarette and held out his cigarette case to Mostovskoy.

"No," said Mostovskoy abruptly.

He felt somehow calmed by the thought that all the policemen in the world—the ones who'd interrogated him forty years ago and the one talking about Hegel and Spengler right now—should use this same idiotic technique of offering their victim a cigarette. Yes, it was just that his nerves were weak—he'd been expecting to be beaten up and suddenly he'd had to listen to this horrible, absurd talk. But then even some of the Tsarist police had known a little about politics—a few of them were really quite educated, one had even read *Das Kapital*. But had there ever been a moment when a policeman studying Marx had wondered, deep in his heart: "What if Marx is right?" What had the policeman felt then . . . ? But what of it? Mostovskoy had trampled on his doubts too. Still, that was different—he was a revolutionary.

Not noticing that Mostovskoy had refused the cigarette, Liss muttered: "Yes, that's right, it's very good tobacco."

He then closed his cigarette case and began again. He sounded genuinely upset.

"Why do you find this conversation so surprising? What did you expect me to say? Surely you have some educated men at your Lubyanka? People who can talk to Academician Pavlov or to Oldenburg? But I'm different from them. I've got no ulterior motive. I give you my word. I'm tormented by the same anxieties as you are." He smiled and added: "My word of honor as a Gestapo officer. And I don't say that lightly."

"Don't say anything," Mostovskoy repeated to himself, "that's the main thing. Don't enter into conversation. Don't argue."

Liss went on talking. Once again he seemed to have forgotten about Mostovskoy.

"Two poles of one magnet! Of course! If that wasn't the case, then this terrible war wouldn't be happening. We're your deadly

enemies. Yes, yes . . . But our victory will be your victory. Do you understand? And if you should conquer, then we shall perish only to live in your victory. It's paradoxical: through losing the war we shall win the war—and continue our development in a different form."

Why on earth had this all-powerful Liss, instead of watching prize-winning films, drinking vodka, writing reports to Himmler, looking at books on gardening, re-reading his daughter's letters, having fun with young girls from today's transport, or even just taking something for his digestion and going to sleep in his spacious bedroom—why on earth had he decided to summon an old Russian Bolshevik who stank of the camps?

What did he have in mind? Why was he keeping his motives so secret? What was the information he wanted?

Mostovskoy wasn't afraid of torture. What did terrify him was the thought: "What if the German isn't lying? What if he's sincere? What if he really does just want someone to talk to?"

What a horrible thought! They were both ill, both worn out by the same illness, but one of them hadn't been able to bear it and was speaking out, while the other remained silent, giving nothing away, just listening, listening . . .

Finally, as though answering Mostovskoy's silent question, Liss opened a file on his desk and very fastidiously, with two fingers, took out some sheets of dirty papers. Mostovskoy immediately recognized them as Ikonnikov's scribblings.

Liss evidently expected him to feel consternation at the sight of the papers planted on him by Ikonnikov . . . But he felt quite calm. He even felt glad to see these scribblings: once again everything was clear—as absurdly simple as every police interrogation.

Liss pushed the papers to the edge of the desk and then drew them back again. Suddenly he began to speak in German:

"I've never seen your handwriting, but I knew from the first words that you could never have written rubbish like this."

Mostovskoy remained silent.

Liss tapped his finger against the papers. He was inviting Mostovskoy to speak, affably, insistently, with good will . . .

Mostovskoy remained silent.

"Have I made a mistake?" asked Liss in surprise. "No, it's not possible. You and I can feel only disgust at what's written here. We two stand shoulder to shoulder against trash like this!"

"Come on now," said Mostovskoy hurriedly and angrily. "Let's get to the point. These papers? Yes, they were taken from me. You

want to know who gave them to me? That's none of your business. Maybe I wrote them myself? Maybe you ordered someone to plant them on me . . . ? All right?"

For a moment he thought Liss would accept his challenge, lose his temper and shout: "We have ways of making you answer!"

He would have liked that so much. That would make everything so straightforward, so easy. What a clear, simple word it was—"enemy."

But Liss only said: "Who cares about these wretched papers? What does it matter who wrote them? I know it was neither of us. Just think for a moment! Who do you imagine fill our camps when there's no war and no prisoners of war? Enemies of the Party, enemies of the People! Yes, and if our Reich Security Administration accepts prisoners of yours in peacetime, then we won't let them out again—your prisoners are our prisoners!"

He grinned.

"The German Communists we've sent to camps are the same ones you sent to camps in 1937. Yezhov imprisoned them: Reichsführer Himmler imprisoned them . . . Be more of a Hegelian, teacher."

He winked at Mostovskoy.

"I've often thought that a knowledge of foreign languages must be as useful in your camps as it is in ours. Today you're appalled by our hatred of the Jews. Tomorrow you may make use of our experience yourselves. And by the day after tomorrow we may be more tolerant again. I have been led by a great man down a long road. You too have been led by a great man; you too have traveled a long, difficult road. Did you really believe Bukharin was an agent provocateur? Only a very great man could lead people down a road like that . . . I knew Roehm myself; I trusted him. But that's how it had to be . . . What tortures me, though, is the thought that your terror killed millions—and we Germans were the only ones who could understand, the only men in the world who thought: 'Yes, that's absolutely right, that's how it has to be!'"

"Please try to understand me—as I understand you. This war ought to appall you. Napoleon should never have fought against England."

Mostovskoy was struck by a new thought. He even screwed up his eyes—either because of a sudden stab of pain or to get rid of this tormenting thought. What if his doubts were not just a sign of weakness, tiredness, impotence, lack of faith, contemptible shillyshallying? What if these doubts represented what was most pure and

honorable in him . . . ? And he just crushed them, pushed them aside, hated them! What if they contained the seed of revolutionary truth? The dynamite of freedom!

All he need do to defeat Liss, to push aside his sticky, slippery fingers, was stop hating Chernetsov, stop despising that holy fool Ikonnikov! No, no, he had to do more than that! He had to renounce everything he had stood for; he had to condemn what he had always lived by.

No, no, he had to do more than that! With all the strength of his soul, with all his revolutionary passion, he would have to hate the camps, the Lubyanka, bloodstained Yezhov, Yagoda, Beria! More than that . . . ! He would have to hate Stalin and his dictatorship!

More than that! He would have to condemn Lenin . . . ! This really was the edge of the abyss.

Yes, this was Liss's victory—not in the war running its course on the battlefields, but in the war of snake venom, the war without gunfire he was waging against him in this office.

For a moment Mostovskoy thought he was about to go mad. Then he let out a sudden joyful sigh of relief. The thought that had horrified and blinded him had turned into dust. It was absurd and pathetic. The hallucination had lasted only a few seconds . . . But still, how was it that for even a second—a fraction of a second—he could have doubted the justice of a great cause?

Liss looked at him and pursed his lips.

"Do you think the world looks on us with horror and on you with hope and love?" he asked. "No, the world looks on us both with the same horror!"

Mostovskoy was no longer afraid of anything. Now he knew where his doubts led: they didn't lead into a swamp—they led to the abyss.

Liss picked up Ikonnikov's papers.

"How can you have anything to do with people like this? Everything's been turned upside down by this accursed war . . . If only I could unravel this tangle!"

There is no tangle, Herr Liss. Everything's very simple and very clear. We don't need to ally ourselves with Chernetsov and Ikonnikov to overpower you. We can deal with both them and you . . .

Mostovskoy realized that everything dark and sinister was embodied in Liss. All rubbish heaps smelled the same; there was no difference between one lot of splintered wood and crushed brick and another. One shouldn't look to garbage and debris in order to under-

stand similarities and differences; one should look to the thoughts, the design, of the builder.

Mostovskoy found himself gripped by a joyful, triumphant rage—against Liss and Hitler, against the English officer with the colorless eyes who had asked him about criticisms of Marxism, against the sickening speeches of the one-eyed Menshevik, against the mawkish preacher who had turned out to be a police agent. Where would these men ever find people stupid enough to believe that there was the faintest shadow of resemblance between a Socialist State and the Fascist Reich? The Gestapo officer Liss was the only consumer of their rotten goods. Now, as never before, Mostovskoy understood the inner link between Fascism and its agents.

And wasn't this the true genius of Stalin? He had hated and annihilated these people because he alone had seen the hidden brotherhood between Fascism and these Pharisees who advocated a specious freedom. This thought now seemed so obvious that he wanted to explain it—to bring home to Liss the full absurdity of his theories. But he contented himself with a smile: he'd been around a long time; he wasn't like that fool Goldenberg who'd blathered to the Public Prosecutor about the affairs of "People's Will."*

He stared straight at Liss. Then, in a voice that could probably be heard by the guard on the other side of the door, he said: "The best advice I can offer you is to stop wasting your time on me. You can stand me against the wall! You can hang me! You can do me in however you like!"

"No one here wishes to do you in," Liss answered hurriedly. "Please calm down."

"I'm quite calm," said Mostovskoy brightly. "I've got nothing to worry about."

"But you do have something to worry about. You should share my sleeplessness. What is the reason for our enmity? I can't understand . . . Is it that the Führer is a mere lackey of Stinnes and Krupp? That there's no private property in your country? That your banks and factories belong to the people? That you're internationalists and we're preachers of racial hatred? That we set things on fire and you extinguish the flames? That the world hates us—and that its hopes are centered on Stalingrad? Is that what you people say . . . ? Nonsense! There is no divide. It's just been dreamed up. In essence we

* A revolutionary organization of the nineteenth century.

are the same—both one-party States. Our capitalists are not the masters. The State gives them their plan. The State takes their profit and all they produce. As their salary they keep six percent of this profit. Your State also outlines a plan and takes what is produced for itself. And the people you call masters—the workers—also receive a salary from your one-party State.”

Mostovskoy watched Liss and thought to himself: “Did this vile nonsense really confuse me for a moment? Was I really choking in this stream of poisonous, stinking dirt?”

Liss gave a despairing wave of the hand.

“A red workers’ flag flies over our People’s State too. We too call people to National Achievement, to Unity and Labor. We say, ‘The Party expresses the dream of the German worker’; you say, ‘Nationalism! Labor!’ You know as well as we do that nationalism is the most powerful force of our century. Nationalism is the soul of our epoch. And ‘Socialism in One Country’ is the supreme expression of nationalism.

“I don’t see any reason for our enmity. But the teacher of genius, the leader of the German people, our father, the best friend of all German mothers, the brilliant and wise strategist, began this war. And I believe in Hitler. And I know that Stalin’s mind is in no way clouded by pain or anger. Through all the fire and smoke of war he can see the truth. He knows his true enemy. Yes—even now when he discusses joint military strategy with him and drinks to his health. There are two great revolutionaries in the world—Stalin and our leader. It is their will that gave birth to State National Socialism.

“Brotherhood with you is more important to me than territory in the East. We are two houses that should stand side by side . . . Now, teacher, I want you to live for a while in quiet solitude. I want you to think, think, think before our next conversation.”

“What for? It’s all just nonsense. It’s absurd and senseless!” said Mostovskoy. “And why call me ‘teacher’ in that idiotic way?”

“There’s nothing idiotic about it,” replied Liss. “You and I both know that it’s not on battlefields that the future is decided. You knew Lenin personally. He created a new type of party. He was the first to understand that only the Party and its Leader can express the spirit of the nation. He did away with the Constituent Assembly. But just as Maxwell destroyed Newton’s system of mechanics while thinking he had confirmed it, so Lenin considered himself a builder of internationalism while in actual fact he was creating the great nationalism of the twentieth century . . . And we learned many things from

Stalin. To build Socialism in One Country, one must destroy the peasants' freedom to sow what they like and sell what they like. Stalin didn't shilly-shally—he liquidated millions of peasants. Our Hitler saw that the Jews were the enemy hindering the German National Socialist movement. And he liquidated millions of Jews. But Hitler's no mere student; he's a genius in his own right. And he's not one to be squeamish either. It was the Roehm purge that gave Stalin the idea of the purge of the Party in 1937 . . . You must believe me. You've kept silent while I've been talking, but I know that I'm like a mirror for you—a surgical mirror."

"A mirror?" said Mostovskoy. "Every word you've said from beginning to end is a lie. It's beneath me to refute your filthy, stinking, provocative blatherings. A mirror? You must be crazy. But Stalingrad will bring you back to your senses."

Liss stood up. In painful confusion, feeling both hatred and ecstasy, Mostovskoy thought, "Now he's going to shoot me. That's it."

But Liss seemed not to have heard Mostovskoy. He bowed from the waist.

"Teacher," he said, "you will continue to teach us and continue to learn from us. We shall think together."

Liss's face was sad and serious, but his eyes were laughing.

Once again the poisoned needle entered Mostovskoy's heart. Liss looked at his watch and said: "Well, time will tell."

He rang a bell and said quietly: "You can have this back if you want it. We shall meet again soon. *Gute Nacht!*"

Without knowing why, Mostovskoy picked the papers up and thrust them into his pocket.

He was led out of the administration building and back out into the cold night. Cool damp air, the howl of sirens in the gloom before dawn—how pleasant it all was after the Gestapo office and the quiet voice of the National Socialist theoretician.

A car with violet headlamps passed them as they reached the sick-bay. Mostovskoy realized that Liss was on his way home. Once again he was seized by a deep melancholy. The guard took him to his cubicle and locked the door. He sat down on the boards and thought: "If I believed in God, I would think that this terrible interrogator had been sent to me as a punishment for my sins."

A new day was already beginning and he was unable to sleep. Leaning back against the rough, splintering planks of pine that had been knocked together into a wall, Mostovskoy began to peruse Ikonnikov's scribbblings.

* * *

"Pavel Andreyevich, that's the wrong song," he interrupted gently.

Andreyev fell silent, looked at him and said:

"I'd never have thought it. I must have been dreaming."

The Georgian sentry was showing Krymov where he had rubbed the skin off his hand.

"That's from digging out my friend, Seryozha Vorobyov."

His black eyes glittered. Then, rather breathlessly, he said:

"I loved that Seryozha more than my own brother."

The words were almost a scream.

Meanwhile the grey-haired night-watchman, covered in sweat and a little the worse for drink, had fastened onto Nikolayev.

"No, you listen to me now! Makuladze says he loved Seryozha Vorobyov more than his own brother. I once worked in an anthracite mine. You should have seen the boss we had there. He really did love me. We drank together and I used to sing. He said straight out: 'You're just like a brother to me, even if you are only a miner.' We used to talk, we used to eat our lunch together."

"A Georgian, was he?" asked Nikolayev.

"What do you mean? He was Mr. Voskresensky, the owner of all the mines. But you'll never understand how much he respected me. A man who had a capital of millions. Is that clear?"

Nikolayev and Krymov exchanged glances. They both winked and shook their heads.

"Well, well," said Nikolayev. "Now that really is something. You live and learn."

"That's right," said the old man, apparently unaware that he was being made fun of.

It was a strange evening. Late at night, as people were beginning to leave, Spiridonov said to Krymov: "Don't start looking for your coat, Nikolay. You're staying here for the night."

He started preparing a place for Krymov to sleep. He did this very slowly, thinking carefully what to put where: the blanket, the padded jacket, the ground sheet. Krymov went outside; he stood for a while in the darkness, looking at the dancing flames, then went back down again. Spiridonov was still at it.

Krymov finally took off his boots and lay down.

"Well, are you comfortable?" Spiridonov asked. He patted Krymov on the head and smiled a kindly, drunken smile.

To Krymov, the fire in the power station was somehow reminiscent of the bonfires in Okhotniy Ryad on that night in January 1924 when they had buried Lenin.

Everyone else who had stayed behind seemed to be already asleep. It was pitch-dark. Krymov lay there with his eyes open, thinking and remembering . . .

There had been a harsh frost for some days. The dark winter sky over the cupolas of Strastnaya monastery. Hundreds of men wearing greatcoats, leather jackets, caps with ear-flaps, pointed helmets . . . At one moment Strastnaya Square had suddenly turned white. There were leaflets, government proclamations, lying all over it.

Lenin's body had been taken from Gorki to the railway station on a peasant sledge. The runners squeaked, the horses snorted. The coffin had been followed by his widow, Krupskaya, wearing a round fur cap held on by a grey headscarf, his two sisters, Anna and Maria, his friends, and some of the village peasants. It might have been the funeral of some agronomist, of a respected village doctor or teacher.

Silence had fallen over Gorki. The polished tiles of the Dutch stoves had gleamed; beside the bed with its white summer bedspread stood a small cupboard full of little bottles with white labels; there was a smell of medicine. A middle-aged woman in a white coat had come into the room; out of habit she walked on tiptoe. She had gone past the bed and picked up a ball of twine with a piece of newspaper tied to the end. The kitten asleep in the empty armchair had looked up as it heard the familiar rustle of its toy; it had looked at the empty bed, yawned and then settled down again.

As they followed the coffin, Lenin's relatives and close comrades had begun reminiscing. His sisters remembered a little boy with fair hair and a difficult character. He had teased them a lot and been impossibly demanding. Still, he had been a good boy and he had loved his mother and his brothers and sisters.

His widow remembered him in Zurich, squatting on the floor and talking to the little granddaughter of Tilly the landlady. Tilly had said, in the Swiss accent that Volodya found so amusing:

"You should have children yourselves."

He had stolen a quick, sly look at Nadyezhda Konstantinovna.

Workers from the 'Dynamo' factory had come to Gorki. Volodya had forgotten his condition and got up to meet them. He had wanted to say something, but had only managed to give a pitiful moan and a despairing wave of the hand. The workers had stood around in a cir-

cle; watching him cry, they had started to cry themselves. And then that frightened, pitiful look of his at the end — like a little boy turning to his mother.

Then the station buildings had come into view. The locomotive, with its tall funnel, had seemed even blacker against the snow.

Lenin's comrades — Rykov, Kamenev and Bukharin — had walked just behind the sledge, their beards white with hoar-frost. From time to time they had glanced absent-mindedly at a swarthy, pock-marked man wearing a long greatcoat and boots with soft tops. They had always felt a contemptuous scorn for his Caucasian style of dress. And had he been a little more tactful, he wouldn't have come to Gorki at all; this was a gathering for Lenin's very closest friends and relatives. None of them understood that this man was the true heir of Lenin, that he would supplant every one of them, even Krupskaya herself.

No, it wasn't Bukharin, Rykov and Zinoviev who were the heirs of Lenin. Nor Trotsky. They were all mistaken. None of them had been chosen to continue Lenin's work. But even Lenin had failed to understand this.

Nearly two decades had passed since that day, since the body of Lenin — the man who had determined the fate of Russia, of Europe, of Asia, of humanity itself — had been drawn through the snow on a creaking sledge.

Krymov couldn't stop thinking about those days. He remembered the bonfires blazing in the night, the frost-covered walls of the Kremlin, the hundreds of thousands of weeping people, the heart-rending howl of factory hooters, Yevdokimov's stentorian voice as he stood on a platform and read an appeal to the workers of the world, the small group who had carried the coffin into the hastily-built wooden mausoleum.

Krymov had climbed the carpeted steps of the House of Unions and walked past the mirrors draped in black and red ribbons; the warm air had been scented with pine needles and full of mournful music. He had gone into the hall and seen the bowed heads of the men he was used to seeing on the tribune at the Smolny or at Staraya Ploshchad. In 1937 he had seen the same bowed heads in the same building. As they listened to the sonorous, inhuman tones of Prosecutor Vyshinsky, the accused had probably remembered how they had walked behind the sledge and stood beside Lenin's coffin, listening to that mournful music.

Why, on this anniversary of the Revolution, had he suddenly

remembered that distant January? Dozens of men who had helped Lenin to create the Bolshevik Party had proved to be foreign spies and provocateurs; and someone who had never occupied a central position in the Party, who had never been highly thought of as a theoretician, had proved to be the saviour of the Party's cause, the bearer of its truth. Why had they all confessed?

Questions like these were best forgotten. But tonight Krymov was unable to forget them . . . Why did they all confess? And why do I keep silent? Why have I never found the strength to say: "I really don't believe that Bukharin was a saboteur, provocateur and assassin." I even raised my hand to vote. I signed. I gave a speech and wrote an article. And I still believe that my zeal was genuine. But where were my doubts then? Where was all my confusion? What is it that I'm trying to say? That I am a man with two consciences? Or that I am two men, each with his own conscience? But then that's how it's always been — for all kinds of people, not just for me.

Grekov had merely given words to what many people felt without admitting it. He had put into words the thoughts that most worried Krymov, that sometimes most attracted him. But Krymov had at once been overwhelmed with hatred and anger. He had wanted to make Grekov lick his boots; he had wanted to break him. If it had come to it, he would have shot him without hesitation.

Pryakhin's words were spoken in the cold language of officialdom. He had talked, in the name of the State, about grain procurements, workers' obligations and percentages of the plan. Krymov had always disliked the soulless speeches delivered by soulless bureaucrats — but these soulless bureaucrats were his oldest comrades, the men he had marched in step with. The work of Lenin was the work of Stalin; it had become embodied in these men, in this State. And Krymov wouldn't hesitate to give his life for the glory of this work.

What about Mostovskoy? He too was an Old Bolshevik. But not once had he spoken out, even in defense of people whose revolutionary honor he had never questioned. He too had kept silent. Why?

And Koloskov, that kind, upright young fellow who'd attended Krymov's courses in journalism. Coming from a village in the country, he'd had a lot to say about collectivization. He'd told Krymov about the scoundrels who included someone's name on a list of kulaks simply because they had their eye on his house or garden, or because they were personal enemies. He'd told Krymov about the terrible hunger, about the ruthlessness with which the peasants' last

grain of corn had been confiscated. He'd begun to cry as he talked about one wonderful old man who'd given his life to save his wife and granddaughter . . . Not long afterwards, Krymov had read an article by Koloskov on the wall-newspaper: apparently the kulaks felt a violent hatred for everything new and were burying their grain in the ground.

Why, after crying his heart out, had Koloskov written such things? Why had Mostovskoy never said anything? Out of cowardice? Krymov had said things that went against his deepest feelings. But he had always believed what he said in his speeches and articles; he was still convinced that his words were a true rejection of his beliefs. Though there had been times when he'd said: "What else can I do? It's for the sake of the Revolution."

Yes, yes . . . Krymov had indeed failed to defend friends whose innocence he had felt sure of. Sometimes he had said nothing, sometimes he had mumbled incoherently, sometimes he had done still worse. There were occasions when he had been summoned by the Party Committee, the District Committee, the City Committee or the *Oblast* Committee—by the security organs themselves. They had asked his opinion about people he knew, people who were members of the Party. He had never said anything bad about his friends, he had never slandered them, he had never written denunciations . . .

What about Grekov? But Grekov was an enemy. Where enemies were concerned, Krymov had never felt a trace of pity. He had never worn kid gloves in dealing with them.

But why had he had nothing more to do with the families of comrades who had been arrested? He had stopped phoning or visiting them. Of course, if he had met them by chance, he had always said hello; he had never crossed over to the other side of the street.

But then there were some people—usually old women, lower-middle-class housewives—who would help you send parcels to someone in camp. You could arrange for someone in camp to write to you at their address. And for some reason they were quite unafraid. These same old women, these superstitious domestics and illiterate nannies, would even take in children whose mothers and fathers had been arrested, saving them from orphanages and reception-centers. Members of the Party, on the other hand, avoided these children like the plague. Were these old women braver and more honorable than Old Bolsheviks like Mostovskoy and Krymov?

People are able to overcome fear: children pluck up their cour-

age and enter a dark room, soldiers go into battle, a young man can leap into an abyss with only a parachute to save him. But what about this other fear, this fear that millions of people find insuperable, this fear written up in crimson letters over the leaden sky of Moscow — this terrible fear of the State . . . ?

No, no! Fear alone cannot achieve all this. It was the revolutionary cause itself that freed people from morality in the name of morality, that justified today's pharisees, hypocrites and writers of denunciations in the name of the future, that explained why it was right to elbow the innocent into the ditch in the name of the happiness of the people. This was what enabled you to turn away from children whose parents had been sent to camps. This was why it was right for a woman — because she had failed to denounce an innocent husband — to be torn away from her children and sent for ten years to a concentration camp.

The magic of the Revolution had joined with people's fear of death, their horror of torture, their anguish when the first breath of the camps blew on their faces.

Once, if you took up the cause of the Revolution, you could expect prison, forced labor, years of homelessness, the scaffold . . . But now — and this was the most terrible thing of all — the Revolution paid those who were still faithful to its great ideal with supplementary rations, with dinners in the Kremlin canteen, with special food parcels, with private cars, trips to holiday resorts and tickets for first-class coaches.

"Are you still awake, Nikolay Grigorevich?" asked Spiridonov out of the darkness.

"Just," said Krymov. "I'm just falling asleep."

"Oh! I'm sorry. I won't disturb you again."

* * *

It was over a week since the night when Mostovskoy had been summoned by Obersturmbannführer Liss. His feeling of tension, of feverish expectancy, had been replaced by a heavy depression. There were moments when he began to think he had been completely forgotten by both his friends and his enemies; that they looked on him as a weak, half-senile old man, a goner.

One clear still morning he was taken to the bath-house. This time the SS guard sat down on the steps outside, putting his tommy-gun down beside him, and lit a cigarette. The sky was clear and the

sun was warm; the soldier obviously preferred not to enter the damp building.

The prisoner on duty came up to Mostovskoy.

"Good morning, dear comrade Mostovskoy."

Mostovskoy let out a cry of astonishment: in front of him stood Brigade Commissar Osipov; he was wearing a uniform jacket with a band on the sleeve and waving an old rag in his hand.

They embraced.

"I managed to get myself a job in the bath-house," Osipov explained hurriedly. "I'm standing in for the usual cleaner. I wanted to see you. Kotikov, the general and Zlatokrylets all send their greetings. But first, how are they treating you, how are you feeling, what do they want from you? You can talk while you're undressing."

Mostovskoy told him about his interrogation.

Osipov stared at him with his dark, prominent eyes.

"The blockheads think they'll be able to win you over."

"But why? Why? What's the point of it all?"

"They may be interested in information of a historical nature, in the personalities of the founders and leaders of the Party. Or they may be intending to ask you to write letters, statements and appeals."

"They're wasting their time."

"They may torture you, comrade Mostovskoy."

"The fools are wasting their time," repeated Mostovskoy. "But tell me—how are things with you?"

"Better than could have been expected," said Osipov in a whisper. "The main thing is that we've made contact with the factory workers. We're stockpiling weapons—machine-guns and hand-grenades."

* * *

Yevgenia got off the trolleybus by the Bolshoy Theatre, now covered in camouflage, and walked up Kuznetsky Most. Without even noticing them, she went past the exhibition rooms of the Artists' Foundation; friends of hers had exhibited there before the war and her own paintings had once been shown there.

It was very strange. Her life was like a pack of cards shuffled by a gypsy. Now she had drawn "Moscow."

She was still a long way away when she recognized the towering granite wall of the Lubyanka. "Hello, Kolya," she thought. Perhaps

Nikolay Grigorevich would sense her presence. Without knowing why, he would feel disturbed and excited.

Her old fate was now her new fate. What had seemed lost for ever had become her future.

The spacious new reception room, whose polished windows looked out onto the street, had been closed; visitors now had to go to the old room. She walked into a dirty courtyard, past a dilapidated wall, and came to a half-open door. Everything inside looked surprisingly normal—tables covered in ink-stains, wooden benches along the walls, little information-windows with wooden sills.

There seemed to be no connection between this ordinary waiting-room and the vast, many-storeyed stone building that looked out over Lubyanka Square, Stretenka, Furkasovsky Lane and Malaya Lubyanka Street.

There were lots of people there; the visitors, mostly women, were standing in line in front of the windows. A few were sitting on the benches, and there was one old man, wearing glasses with thick lenses, who was filling in a form at a table. Looking at these faces— young and old, male and female, Yevgenia noticed that the expression in their eyes and the set of their mouths all spoke of one thing. If she had met any of these people on the street or in a tram, she could have guessed that they frequented 24 Kuznetsky Most.

She turned to the young man by the door. He was dressed in an army greatcoat, but for some reason he looked very unlike a soldier. “Your first time?” he asked, and pointed to one of the windows. Yevgenia took her place in the queue, passport in hand, her fingers and palms damp with sweat. A woman in a beret who was standing in front of her said quietly:

“If he’s not here in the Inner Prison, you must go to Matrosskaya Tishina and then to the Butyrka—but that’s only open on certain days and they see people in alphabetical order. If he’s not there, you must go to the Lefortovo military prison, and then back here again. I’ve been looking for my son for six weeks now. Have you been to the military prosecutor yet?”

The queue was moving very quickly. That seemed a bad sign—the answers people were getting must be vague and laconic. Then it was the turn of a smart, middle-aged woman and there was a delay; the word went round that the man on duty had gone to check something, that a mere telephone conversation hadn’t been enough. The woman had turned round and was half-facing the queue; her slightly narrowed eyes seemed to be saying that she had no intention of let-

ting herself be treated in the same manner as this miserable crowd of relatives of the repressed.

Soon the queue began to move again; a young woman who had just left the window said quietly: "Everyone's getting the same answer: parcel not accepted."

"That means the investigation's still not completed," explained the woman in front of Yevgenia.

"What about visits?"

"Visits?" The woman smiled at Yevgenia's naïvete.

Yevgenia had never realized that the human back could be so expressive, could so vividly reflect a person's state of mind. People had a particular way of craning their necks as they came up to the window; their backs, with their raised, tensed shoulders, seemed to be crying, to be sobbing and screaming.

When Yevgenia was seventh in the queue, the window slammed shut and a twenty-minute break was announced. Everyone sat down on the chairs and benches.

There were wives and mothers; there was a middle-aged engineer whose wife—an interpreter in the All Union Society for Cultural Relations—had been arrested; there was a girl in her last year at school whose mother had been arrested and whose father had been sentenced in 1937 to "ten years without right of correspondence"; there was an old blind woman who had been brought here by a neighbor to inquire after her son; there was a foreigner, the wife of a German Communist, who spoke very poor Russian. She wore a foreign-looking checked coat and carried a brightly-colored cloth handbag, but her eyes were the eyes of an old Russian woman.

There were Russian women, Armenian women, Ukrainian women and Jewish women. There was a woman who worked on a *kolkhoz* near Moscow. The old man who had been filling in the form turned out to be a lecturer at the Timiryazev Academy; his grandson, a schoolboy, had been arrested—apparently for talking too much at a party.

Yevgenia learned a great deal during those twenty minutes.

The man on duty today was one of the good ones . . . They don't accept tinned food in the Butyrka . . . You really must bring onion and garlic, they're good for scurvy . . . There was a man here last Wednesday who'd come to pick up his documents, he'd been three years in the Butyrka without once being interrogated and had then been released . . . Usually people are sent to a camp about a year after they've been arrested . . . You mustn't bring anything too

good—at the transit prison in Krasnaya Presnaya the ‘politicals’ are put together with the common criminals and everything gets stolen . . . There was a woman here the other day, whose elderly husband, an important engineer and designer, had been arrested, apparently he’d had a brief affair in his youth and gone on sending the woman alimony for a son he’d never even set eyes on. The son, now adult, had deserted to the Germans. And the old man had got ten years for fathering a traitor to the Motherland . . . Most people were sentenced under article 58-10: Counter-Revolutionary Agitation, or not keeping their mouths shut . . . There had been arrests just before the first of May, there were always a lot just before public holidays . . . There was one woman who’d been phoned at home by the investigator and had suddenly heard her husband’s voice . . .

How strange it all was. Here, in the waiting room of the NKVD, Yevgenia somehow felt calmer, less depressed, than she had done after her bath in Lyudmila’s house.

What wonderful good fortune to have a parcel accepted!

One of the people near her said in a stifled whisper: “When it comes to people who were arrested in 1937, they just say whatever comes into their head. One woman was told: ‘He’s alive and working.’ She came back a second time and the same person gave her a certificate saying that her husband had died in 1939.”

Now it was Yevgenia’s turn. The man behind the window looked up at her. His face was like that of any other clerk; yesterday he might have been working on the desk at a fire station, and tomorrow, if he was ordered to, he might be filling in forms for military decorations.

“I want to inquire about someone who’s been arrested—Krymov, Nikolay Grigorevich,” said Yevgenia. She had the feeling that even people who didn’t know her would be able to tell that she wasn’t speaking in her normal voice.

“When was he arrested?”

“November.”

The man took out a form. “Fill this in. You don’t need to queue again—just hand it straight in. And come back tomorrow for the answer.”

As he handed her the form, the man looked at her again. This time his rapid glance was not that of an ordinary clerk at all—it was the glance of a Chekist, an intelligent glance that remembers everything.

She filled in the form with trembling fingers—just like the old man from the Timiryazev Academy who not long before had been sit-

ting on the same chair. When she came to the question about her relationship to the person arrested, she wrote "Wife," underlining the word heavily.

She handed the form in, sat down on the bench and put her passport back in her bag. She kept moving it from one part of the bag to another; finally she realized this was because she didn't want to leave the people in the queue.

At that moment she wanted only one thing: to let Krymov know that she was here, that she had given up everything for him, that she had come to him.

If only he could find out that she was here, so near him!

She walked down the street. It was already evening. Most of her life had been spent in this city. But that life—with its theaters, art exhibitions, orchestral concerts, dinners in restaurants and visits to dachas—was now so distant as to be no longer her own. Stalingrad and Kuibyshev had disappeared—as had the handsome, sometimes divinely handsome face of Novikov himself. All that was left was 24 Kuznetsky Most. It was as though she was walking down the unfamiliar streets of a city she had never seen before.

Translated by Robert Chandler

Coming in

PARTISAN REVIEW

- An Interview with Julia Kristeva
- Lionel Abel on George Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*
- Jeffrey Herf: *Out of the Sixties*
- Raymond Aron: *A Memoir*
- George F. Chapline: *In Defense of Star Wars*
- George Stade: *Dracula's Women*

Morris Dickstein

SHOAH AND THE MACHINERY OF DEATH

Claude Lanzmann's nine and a half-hour documentary, *Shoah*, is an unspeakably moving film, perhaps even a great film, but is far from being the definitive work on the Holocaust we had been led to expect. Lanzmann's much-discussed refusal to use archival footage can be seen as a way of avoiding stereotyped responses. He is determined not to numb us or nauseate us with horrific images for which we are already defensively prepared, images we *instinctively disbelieve*. By means of oral testimony and contemporary images, he aims to rescue the killing process from its irretrievable past even as he underlines the Nazis' effort to leave behind no physical traces.

Lanzmann distrusts the imagery of the Holocaust: only living witnesses satisfy him. He has objected that the pictures of victims we see in Alain Resnais's great *Night and Fog* (1955) were taken only after the Allied liberation of Bergen-Belsen, not in itself a death camp. Unlike those processed at Auschwitz, these people died mainly of starvation and disease. But Lanzmann himself, because he lacks both pictures and witnesses, leaves out the crucial first phase of the *Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile killing squads, who virtually swept the Ukraine clean of Jews. His subject is the step-by-step bureaucratic procedures by which Jews of many European nations were transported to "the East," to killing centers in Poland where they were systematically put to death. This narrow focus on the operational machinery of destruction gives the film its stark impact and historical value, but it also marks the severe limits Lanzmann set for himself.

The disturbing tunnel vision of *Shoah*, which no reviewer seems to have noticed, came home to me forcefully during a brief sequence dealing with the Jews of Corfu, only five percent of whom survived deportation to Auschwitz. The whole scene is a surprise: who ever heard of Jews on the island of Corfu? Their fate, I find, takes up barely a page or two in Raul Hilberg's capacious tome, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961). But as Lanzmann questions a handful of survivors in various languages, learns how they were rounded up and shipped off, probes into their relations with their neighbors, and even, in a unique scene, shows them at prayer in their synagogue, I was struck by how much of Jewish existence the film had sheared away in its unswerving attention to the annihilation process. Lanzmann is

too engrossed by the technical challenge these islanders represented, their sheer distance from Auschwitz. A long, perhaps fascinating film could have been made about the Jews of Corfu alone, but to Lanzmann, unfortunately, despite his empathy with their fate, their lives carry little charge of personal reality. He shows little curiosity about how they lived beforehand or even how these few escaped. In the intricate mosaic of *Shoah*, as in the machinery of the Holocaust itself, they make only a cameo appearance as a remote community, arbitrarily uprooted, that presented certain logistical problems to the architects of elimination.

With his consuming interest in the Holocaust as a feat of improvised technical organization, Lanzmann focuses far more attention on Jewish deaths than on Jewish lives. Were it not for the quiet intensity of his chief witnesses, survivors whose terrible histories are etched indelibly on their faces and in the sound of their voices, this might easily have become a film that was more about trains and gas chambers than about people. Lanzmann's keen interviewing and inspired editing weaves these witnesses' stories together seamlessly with testimony by Germans and Poles who were cogs in the machinery or bystanders who watched it grind on. In large overlapping sequences that never let up, we move from the rudimentary experiments in mass murder at Chelmno (Kulmhof), to the "primitive but efficient production line of death" (an SS man's words) at Treblinka, to the perfected assembly-line techniques in Auschwitz, along with all the associated problems of transportation and disposal, and conclude with the Warsaw ghetto as another kind of factory whose product was death. As each witness speaks, we see (as in *Night and Fog*) almost lyrical color footage of the killing grounds and railroad tracks as they appear today, tranquil, mute, at once anchoring and belying the stories they tell, making them seem as incontrovertible as they are unthinkable. (The printed text of *Shoah* is available from Pantheon Books. Though it lacks all indication of the visual *mise en scène*, it is a valuable record of the spoken evidence and gives a particularly good sense of the film's intricate structure.)

Lanzmann has asserted in interviews and articles that he wished to affirm the *presence* of the Holocaust and redeem it from legend by confining his film to what can be heard or seen today. Some, especially on the French right, have debunked the killing entirely, just as they long suppressed the truth about their collaboration with the Germans. Determined to bring the story home in more detail than we have ever heard in a film before, Lanzmann establishes a slow, rivet-

ing, hypnotic rhythm, full of echoes and repetitions, transitions and translations. At moments this feels to us like an ordeal, mimicking the larger ordeal of the filmmaker and even the victims. But the film never assaults the audience or falls into self-pity or self-righteousness; what we hear is worth the emotional price we pay. Never has a film depended so heavily on the spoken word or believed as much in the urgency of unearthing the exact truth. To get at this truth Lanzmann lies shamelessly to the Nazis he manages to interview, posing as an historian, promising them anonymity while filming them with hidden equipment. These grainy scenes have a different visual (and moral) texture from the rest of the film; the crude pictures and thriller devices convey the furtiveness of the beasts he's stalking and the single-minded fury of his quest for evidence.

One of these reluctant witnesses, an important SS officer from Treblinka named Franz Suchomel, provides him with just the kind of step-by-step procedural descriptions he is always after. He is the one who heartily compares the efficiency of Treblinka and Auschwitz as death factories and carefully scales down Lanzmann's figures on the daily output, as if they were too flattering. In a memorable scene that begins the second half of the film, he even sings a camp song that "worker Jews" were forced to learn, vowing their loyalty and duty to Treblinka, their "destiny." Lanzmann is so transfixed by the performance he presses the old man to sing it again, louder. "Satisfied?" the man asks. "That's unique. No Jew knows that today." Elsewhere, when Suchomel feels obliged to defend himself Lanzmann assures him, quite honestly, that "we're not discussing you, only Treblinka." Lanzmann has no interest in Nazis as individuals, or even as war criminals, but the most minute curiosity about Treblinka as a functioning organism — an interest which Suchomel seems glad to gratify.

The uncanny match between Lanzmann's probing and this Nazi's straight factual recollections recurs in the filmmaker's evident rapport with Raul Hilberg, the only Holocaust historian who appears in the film and the man whose operational approach seems in many ways to have inspired it. Like Hilberg's massive book, *Shoah* is unusual in Holocaust studies in having no grand theory, no overt quality of metaphysical anguish or ethical interpretation. When he first appears Hilberg indicates the basis of his life's work in words that could also serve as a keystone for the movie: "In all my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers." He adds that he prefers to deal with "minutiae or details" in order to form "a picture which, if

not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired." At one point Hilberg helps Lanzmann decipher a requisition for a "special train"—not with horror but with the pleasure of an archival historian poring over an original document. Hilberg's dry manner may seem cold and pedantic, but it is a timely antidote to a dozen handwringing articles by Elie Wiesel.

Like Hilberg, Lanzmann affects a cool detachment: how else could he get through the day or get the work done? Like Resnais and his scenarist Jean Cayrol in *Night and Fog*, he brings together past and present at the very site of the camps, avoiding rhetoric for understatement and allowing the subject to reveal its own meaning. Like Marcel Ophuls in *The Sorrow and the Pity*, Lanzmann is an aggressive interviewer, always present as the investigator-protagonist of the film, prodding and probing his Jewish witnesses with a stubbornness that seems cruel yet necessary. But the effect of Lanzmann's questions and the feeling of the film as a whole are markedly different from what we get in Ophuls. Lanzmann poses as the simple man, always pressing for more explanation, more circumstantial detail. But with those who helped operate the machinery or who stood by and did nothing, his tone of voice often conveys anger, sarcasm, or weary incredulity—reactions which usually escape his listeners. He never takes on a tone of complicity with these people, as his translators do. He comes to no pact of understanding with them. His cold determination to learn the full truth never flags. He badgers his Jewish witnesses with the same firmness. Though they are visibly wounded men, they are as instrumental to his quest as the Germans and the Poles.

Ophuls, on the other hand, has an instinctive knack for drawing out a hateful point of view. The collaborators can open up with him. As they lay bare their secrets and those of France itself, his empathy complicates our moral calculus. His motto, it seems, is Jean Renoir's: "The really terrible thing is that everyone has his reasons." Taken to an extreme, as in his flawed film *The Memory of Justice*, this humanism leads to an attitude of *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*, or worse still, to the idea that everyone is guilty. By exploring atrocities in Algeria and Vietnam committed *since* the war, he implies that the Allies could not truly judge the Germans at Nuremberg, for they too have dirty hands. This is not only illogical, it is wrong, for the scale, planning, and technology of the Holocaust make it incommensurable, as Lanzmann and Hilberg seem to suggest.

By telling us exactly how it happened, stroke by stroke, *Shoah* invites us to see the Holocaust as a crime unique in human history.

Hilberg shows us what the Germans took from previous anti-Semitism — the intolerance, the discriminatory laws, the yellow star, the imagery of contamination — and where they were forced to improvise, to be original, especially in their program of mass destruction. In an ingenious twist, they even made the Jews pay for their own deportation and death. Since there was never a “budget for destruction,” and the railroads punctually demanded excursion fares for every passenger, by the mile, payment could be made only from the sale of confiscated property. A tribute to German thrift, the “final solution” had to pay its own way.

The Nazis’ main inventions, besides the killing techniques, included an astonishing range of tricks to keep the victims unwary, helpless, or slightly hopeful until the very moment they were gassed. Those who had traveled some distance arrived in the camps already half-dead from thirst and hunger. Constantly beaten, forced always to run, stripped naked, they were treated to lying speeches in rooms designed as reassuring stage sets, with signs stressing hard work and good hygiene. Even the Zyklon gas at Auschwitz was delivered by a “disinfection squad” in vans marked with a red cross, which also flew over the “infirmary” at Treblinka where the old and sick were simply dispatched with a bullet (“cured with a single pill”) above an open pit full of burning corpses. (This ghastly imagery of health follows readily from the Nazi terminology of pollution and disease — the “Jewish bacillus.”)

All the written business of the Holocaust takes place within the same web of euphemism and deception. Lanzmann still hears terms like “resettlement” from Nazis he interviews, men who kept the trains running, not wanting to know where they went, or kept the noose tightened around the Warsaw ghetto under the guise of “maintaining” it. The Holocaust was to take place in a nameless void, hidden from the Jews, hidden from the world, hidden — if you can believe it — from the Germans themselves, screened from view above all by a profound disbelief that such a thing could actually happen — this was their secret weapon. By late 1943 most of the smaller death camps had already been dismantled. Their job was done. All that was left was the achingly beautiful countryside we see today. The scenario was almost complete.

By telling us exactly what happened, *Shoah* settles historical questions it never even raises, like the nagging issue of Jewish resistance. How many times have we heard it ignorantly repeated — as if we had the right to sit in judgment — that the Jews went to their deaths

like sheep? But in *Shoah* there's hardly a story that doesn't show how much the Germans did to avoid panic and prevent resistance. In the one instance where the Jews actually knew they would be gassed, because they already had been in Auschwitz for six months, they resisted fiercely and scorned the usual false assurances—for all the good it did them. Much about the Holocaust will never be known because the Nazis took care to leave no witnesses. How many of us have ever even heard of Chelmno, where 400,000 were shipped and only two survived? Besides these two, whom Lanzmann interviews, only Polish peasants and trainmen survive as witnesses, though what they tell us testifies mainly to their indifference, if not outright satisfaction. Lanzmann rightly withholds moral judgment—that is for us to make—but he is engrossed by the way people could go about their business within sight of mass annihilation.

Above all, like any filmmaker, he wants something to *happen* that will dramatize what no existing pictures can show. Thus he sets up blatantly “fictional” devices that can feel manipulative—bringing a survivor back to the site of one of the camps, having him sing songs the Nazis taught him, songs that kept him alive, having him confront Polish peasants who remember him (just as a church procession is about to pass), hiring a locomotive to run again along the narrow-gauge tracks long out of use, arranging for a Tel Aviv barber to cut hair as he tells the story of cutting women's hair in the gas chamber itself, forcing him to go on when he finally chokes up, while zooming in mercilessly on his stricken face. The enormity of the Holocaust, the pressure of his obsession with it, licenses Lanzmann to lie to his Germans, badger his Poles, and even torment his Jews—in short, to “stage” his revelations as the Nazis cunningly staged their concealments.

The real strength of the film has nothing to do with these willed “cinematic” touches. Lanzmann's chief witnesses plainly have extraordinary stories to tell, and Lanzmann unerringly finds the right images and the right editing rhythm to punctuate them: to give us a sense of the simple truth of simply incredible events. By the last hour or so, when we get to the Warsaw ghetto, which, except for a stark war monument, doesn't survive even as an image, Lanzmann's montage begins to fail him. Perhaps this breakdown is deliberate, to suggest the black pit into which the Jews had fallen or Lanzmann's half-crazed fatigue in following them there. Instead of visual references we concentrate on the deeply troubled face of Jan Karski, the courier of the Polish government in exile, who secretly toured the ghetto and

then tried to alert the outside world, and the quiet voice of Simha Rottem, a rare survivor of the desperate Jewish uprising. Lanzmann is telling us with subdued eloquence that only talking heads can evoke a place that was “not a world . . . not a part of humanity” but merely streets full of creatures about to be corpses. Tightly edited until now, the film turns open-ended, as if Lanzmann hadn’t the heart to tie any more threads together.

In the end Lanzmann achieves the unusual feat of letting the Jews, the Poles, and the Germans all speak for themselves. By hunting up articulate survivors and making them relive their experiences, he gives voice to the dead and draws a complete picture from only the faintest of traces. Several of these Jewish witnesses—Abraham Bomba, the stoical barber who finally breaks down under Lanzmann’s probing, Richard Glazar, a more austere, more analytical storyteller, Filip Müller, who speaks with child-eyed wonder and disbelief at the things he saw, and Rudolf Vrba, altogether too self-satisfied, who daringly broke out of Auschwitz and tried to warn the Jews of Hungary—speak with such cogency, such precision, that their memories form the backbone of the movie. Each of them a distinctive presence, they make *Shoah* a character study in spite of itself. By giving them large segments of his even larger mosaic, Lanzmann grudgingly undercuts his own operational bias and softens the film’s disquieting impersonality. All the while, the babble of languages and translations brings home to us the vast European scope of the killing and the far-flung dispersal of its few survivors. By piecing all this together on such a scale, and making it more emotionally vivid to us than any printed work or melodrama can, *Shoah* itself joins these survivors in bearing witness to the most momentous deeds of our time.

Gideon Telpaz

FOUR CAMELS OUT OF THE DESERT

The war swept on and nobody stayed behind to bury the dead. I could smell them lying in the dunes as I drove along the desert highway past charred vehicles, abandoned gun emplacements, enemy tanks that yesterday were fierce and yellow as the desert sand and today black junk.

My unit had sped on ahead. By the time I caught up with it, the Arab coastal town to whose hospital I was assigned had fallen. The last shots of snipers still rained from the nearby dunes, but all over the town, from balconies and rooftops, white flags were flying.

I pulled up beside an MP standing next to his motorcycle in a square in front of the mosque. "Which way to the hospital?"

"Follow me," he said, revving up his motorcycle.

At the entrance to the hospital I was met by a sergeant of the Medical Corps, a heavyset reservist. "Sergeant Bashan," he introduced himself, "and you must be the doctor we're expecting." He was in the unit that had arrived here the day before.

We walked down the long corridor, his loud voice reverberating in the empty ward as he gave me the rundown on the hospital.

"They all beat it. Medical personnel and patients. Everyone who could picked himself up and bolted before we got in."

"And those who could not?"

"We found thirteen dead here. Mostly soldiers."

"How many?" I stopped short.

"Thirteen."

We went into the operating room. A dead man was lying on the table, his amputated arm on the floor in a blot of dried blood.

"They left him like that, in the middle of surgery," Sergeant Bashan said.

"Why didn't you remove him?"

"I thought you might want to see how we found the hospital."

After he left I explored the hospital further. The corridors had the familiar antiseptic odor, but mingled with it were the distinctive smells of an Arab town. Through the windows of the upper floor I could see the sea, calm, gently lapping, streaked with silver. Closer were the narrow alleys, the low squat houses, the mosque, and the palm trees on the beach. There was movement in the alleyways.

Hesitantly, the inhabitants were coming out from the shuttered houses. Some took a stroll to the mosque square to have a look at the conquerors.

The sound behind me was so faint, it barely reached me. I swung around and saw a girl pressed against the wall. "No! Please don't!" Her hand trembled against her throat. I rushed forward, but she had already collapsed. I picked her up and carried her to one of the beds. She was emaciated, lost in a large hospital gown. Her eyes opened wide as I bent over her, and I could hear her whispering, "You're not like them. You won't do that!"

"Won't do what?"

She put out her tongue to moisten her lips as she regained her breath.

"Who are you?"

"Muna. My name is Muna." Her quivering English barely concealed an accent. "You are an Israeli?" She tried to raise her voice. "A doctor?"

Her eyes kept watching me. I arranged the pillow under her head. "Why were you admitted to this hospital?"

"Perhaps you can tell me. I have been here over a month. Five doctors examined me. Perhaps you can tell me why."

"What did they tell you?"

"Nothing." She closed her eyes, then opened them again. "They found nothing, or perhaps they preferred that I should not know."

"How old are you?"

"I look forty. I'm nineteen. Am I dying?"

I had no chance to answer. The door opened. Sergeant Bashan stood on the threshold. "Hey! Who's she? Where did you find her?"

I looked at him.

"We made a thorough search!" he went on. "Where did you find her?"

"Here."

"Where 'here'?"

"Inside one of the test tubes."

I strode out to the corridor. He caught up with me. "No kidding. Tell me!"

"What does it matter?"

"It matters."

"Why?"

"I thought no patient was left here."

"You mean left alive."

"What are you going to do with her? She can't stay here. That's against orders."

"I know what the orders are, Sergeant. Any other comments?" He looked away. "Well then," I told him, "why don't you begin to organize the place so that we can get to work?"

The orders were to clean out the hospital and prepare it for casualties coming in from the front further south. But by the next day we knew that our casualties were light. I sent north all the wounded who could make the trip. The Arab girl Muna was my only serious case. The lab up north sent me the results twenty-four hours after receiving samples of her blood and bone marrow. They tallied with what was written on her chart, which I located in the office the following morning: eighty percent of her marrow was leukemic.

Shortly after my arrival I received an invitation from Major Golan, the Military Governor, to drop by for a get-acquainted chat. Before leaving, I went into Muna's room. She lay motionless, her face averted.

"Can I get you anything?"

She made no answer.

"What's that?" I pulled a book from under her pillow. It was *Pride and Prejudice*. "So that's how you pass the time. Are you a Jane Austen fan?"

"She is one of the authors I have to read," Muna broke her silence, still avoiding my eyes.

"Where are you studying?"

"At the university. In Cairo."

"English literature?"

She nodded.

"So what brought you to this town?"

"I came to see my family."

"They live here?"

"They used to. They left for Cairo just before the war. I was supposed to join them as soon as the doctors finished their tests." Then she said, "My father had a shop on the main street. You can see it, if it's still there."

"Why shouldn't it be?"

"The night before your troops arrived, the retreating soldiers passed through and looted the shops. I saw them from up here. I saw them break into my father's shop."

"Nobody tried to stop them?"

"You ask so many questions, Doctor," she said wearily.

"Just answer this. What other authors do you have to read?" Her eyes rested on me with uncertainty. "Look," I said, "I need to know the titles. I'll get them for you."

"It would be nice if you could get me something by Galsworthy."

Major Golan received me on the balcony of the town hall. A man of average height, he had a bony face with a clipped, silver-streaked mustache. He wore khaki shorts, British style, his socks reaching to his knees, and he gave off the fragrance of fine tobacco. In civilian life he was a real estate developer who put new towns on the map. After a firm handshake he introduced his party. "Care for a real Turkish coffee?"

Below, in the large, open square, there was a crowd of sixty or seventy men, some in striped pajamas, others in white traditional robes. An old Arab sitting with us kept pointing down towards one or another of them. One of the officers would then give the word on the walkie-talkie, and the MPs in the courtyard would step into the crowd and grab the ones singled out.

"We were lucky this morning," Major Golan said, handing me a tiny cup of spicy bittersweet coffee. "We stumbled upon a cellar which turned out to be the local headquarters of the fedayeen. We found a complete list of all the members of the gang."

"How does he fit into the picture?" I asked, indicating the old Arab who was eyeing me obsequiously.

"He puts the finger on them."

"And maybe is using the opportunity to pay off old scores?"

Major Golan puffed on his pipe, giving me an indulgent smile. "That shouldn't be too difficult to find out." He followed the smoke ring with his eyes.

When I returned to the hospital I wrote my wife to send me whatever she could find by Galsworthy, and a few days later a parcel arrived containing *The Forsyte Saga*. I went into Muna's room and put it on her bed. She thanked me but did not touch it. I left it lying there and walked out.

Major Golan's offer to join him for a trip in the desert came just when a nagging sense of waste was beginning to get me down. I was ready for a change of scenery. We drove along the foot of bare lime-hills, the narrow paths winding between craters, cliffs and rocks. Patches of broom-bushes and withered grass dotted the dunes. The sand gave off a blinding glare. It was littered with discarded army

boots, parts of uniforms, knapsacks. Tracks of bare feet stretched far into the horizon where the enemy soldiers had fled.

The sun was still high when we spotted three figures trudging through the sand a mile away. Two of them were wrapped in Bedouin abeyas, the third wore only underpants. There were four of us in the jeep, Major Golan next to the driver and a lieutenant and me in the back. The jeep hopped and lurched over the dunes as we headed towards them. At the sight of us, the one in underpants took to his heels and ran, while the other two remained where they were, their hands raised in the air. The lieutenant opened fire, and the runaway crouched down, then resumed his zigzag running, the firing shooting up the sand to his right and to his left.

"Let him go," Major Golan said. He surveyed the other two. They were as black as ashes. "Who are you?" he asked in Arabic.

"Who? Us? We are Bedouin—Bedouin brothers we are."

"And him?"

"Who?"

"That one over there."

"Him?" They cast a furtive glance in the direction of the runner who was now nearing a ravine. "Don't know him."

"You were walking together."

"The desert is vast."

"Where are you heading?"

They pointed their chins towards the horizon.

"What's there?"

"There? Our father is there. We are going to visit our father who is sick."

"If they're Bedouin I'm a Hottentot," the lieutenant snarled. "Ask them where they discarded their uniforms."

Major Golan regarded the two Arabs silently.

The lieutenant kept on looking in the direction of the third, who now vanished in the ravine. "Aren't we going to take them with us?"

Major Golan didn't bother to reply. The driver started up the jeep. "Yallah, yallah!" he yelled, but the two Arabs did not budge. They stared at us as we drove away, their hands stretched up, their bare feet planted in the scorching sand.

Towards evening we reached a small oasis with a spring and a grove of date palms. We took off our clothes and bathed in the spring. The palm trees were heavy with dates. You could knock them loose

by throwing a stone up. As we watched the sunset over the distant dunes, the heat subsided. With darkness a mysterious hush fell upon the desert.

I lay wrapped in a blanket, looking at the moon shining on the cliffs and listening to Major Golan snoring in his sleeping bag. I can't recall when I fell asleep, but I was awakened by a frightful sound. I sat up and reached for my gun. The sand creaked. Someone was drawing near with heavy steps and a low growl. As I watched, four gigantic shadows detached themselves from the darkness, looming among the palm trees. I recognized them by their humps. Four camels out of the desert. Trudging through the trees, swaying from side to side, they lowered their long necks, stuck their heads into empty cans and drew up with a moan, driven mad by the smell of water. Finally they found the trough. They lapped up the water, snorting and gurgling, then trotted around among the palm trees, chewing the dates that lay on the sand. Then, all at once, they turned in unison and headed back to the desert.

Above the palm trees the sky was gold with glittering stars, but the stars were fading fast, and the moon grew paler. I lay awake and watched a pink beam of light, hesitant and trembling, split the East. Dawn broke indolently. I got up and washed in the spring. The light was soft, caressing; it would be a while before it hardened and became harsh and blinding.

On the way back I talked to Major Golan about Muna. Eyebrows raised, he listened attentively. "Interesting. I thought the hospital was deserted when you took it over. What is she suffering from?"

"Leukemia."

"At what stage?"

"It's critical."

"I suppose you have no facilities to treat her here. Would you rather send her north? That is, if she'll benefit from it."

"I'll have to ask her."

"Do that."

Back at the hospital I realized that Muna was in a worse state than I thought. But when I suggested sending her to a better hospital for proper chemotherapy, she propped herself up on the pillows, shaking with agitation, and cried, "Don't send me away! Please!"

"I can't give you the best treatment there is, Muna."

"You are good enough for me!"

"But here I'm limited in what I can do."

"No! Don't send me away! They'll finish me off just as they did the —"

She sank back, her hand over her mouth.

"Go on," I said.

"You don't know." She spoke faintly, and I had to lean closer. "You arrived later."

"What did I miss?"

"After the flight of the doctors and nurses, only the severely wounded remained. When the soldiers came in, I was hiding. They didn't see me. They didn't know I was watching —" Her voice cracked, and she broke off.

"What did you watch?" I pressed on.

She grasped my hand. "Please, don't let them take me away! Please!" She grew hysterical.

I injected a sedative and she quieted down. Suddenly her nose began to bleed. She lost a lot of blood. I had to give her a transfusion.

I went into my office and sent for Sergeant Bashan.

"You told me you were among the first to arrive here."

"Check."

"You told me you saw thirteen dead."

"Check."

"All of them were dead?"

"Very dead."

"What did they die of?"

"I told you. The Egyptian staff made off. All the doctors and nurses. Nobody stayed to attend to them." He looked at me puzzled.

"How did it happen they all died the same night?"

Sergeant Bashan scratched the back of his curly head.

"Search me. If I'd been to medical school for six years, maybe I could give you an answer." Then, raising his voice, he said, "Besides, who said they all died the same night? Not all of them. Some popped off before. They needed urgent treatment. They didn't get it and that was that. What's the problem?"

"Maybe it was the other way around?"

"How do you mean the other way around?"

"Maybe they died because of the treatment? Maybe it was the urgent treatment that finished them off?"

He glared at me. "Did that Arab girl put such crap into your head? You believe her? She is delirious most of the time! What do you expect after stuffing her with all those drugs!"

For a long time after he left my office I gazed out through the window. I had grown accustomed to the sight—the white mosque, the maze of alleyways, the unpaved square with the camels, the fruit vendors, the two cafés with the narghila-smokers, the MPs strolling in pairs, the townsfolk in their long striped abeyas, the straggling houses, the seafront with the palm trees, the grounded fishing boats.

I went to my desk and picked up the phone.

“Those thirteen corpses found in the hospital when we entered, what do you really know about them?”

I thought I could smell the fine tobacco Major Golan was smoking. “Is there anything I ought to know in addition to your report?” he said.

“My report may not be complete. There may be another version.”

“Such as?”

“That those people did not die as described.”

“But?”

“Were put to death.”

“By whom?”

“This is yet to be determined.”

In the silence that suddenly fell I thought of only one thing, the bluish smoke ring that Major Golan was now puffing into the air at the other end. “My dear fellow, what you’re suggesting—if I get your drift—is quite serious,” he said at last. “I should say, more than serious.”

I said nothing.

“I shall order an immediate investigation and see that the law is implemented to the fullest extent—if what you’re suggesting is warranted.”

In the afternoon two MPs presented themselves in my office. I took them into Muna’s room. I sat beside her bed while they interrogated her.

“Where were you when our soldiers entered the hospital?”

“In the medicine closet.”

“What were you doing there?”

“Hiding.”

“What did you see?”

She saw nothing, knew nothing.

For the rest of the day she avoided my eyes. Whenever I entered she pretended to be asleep. On my last visit that night, just before I left for my quarters, she finally spoke. “You must forget about it, Doctor. I am very sick. Perhaps I made it all up.”

Three weeks after my conscription and less than a month after the war had broken out, I was allowed my first home leave. A three-day leave, two days of which were spent on the trip back and forth. For the first time I appreciated the virtues of the small apartment my wife and I shared, relished the intimacy of our furniture, the softness of the lampshades, the simple assurance of the toilet soap in the bathroom, the kitchen smells. I even found pleasure in standing in line at the grocery store, in the roar of the buses going by. My wife took a day off to be with me. Perhaps I ought to have been more romantic, taken her out, wine and dined her. Before parting, she bought a box of chocolates and put it in my bag as I set out on the long journey back.

"Please thank your wife for me," Muna said as she put the package aside. "It was kind of her to think of me."

"Hey! I bring you chocolate, I drag it for miles across the desert, and you don't even open the package. Don't you like chocolate?"

Muna sat up, stuck the pillow between herself and the bedrest and leaned back. "I thought you wouldn't come back."

I looked at her.

"You don't like being here. I thought you might ask for a transfer."

"Well, I didn't." I got up.

She watched me. "Have you got a photo of her?"

"A photo of whom?"

"Your wife."

"And if I do?"

"Can I see it?"

I took out the snapshot I carried in my wallet.

"She's pretty," Muna said, handing it back to me. Her hand was damp. She left it in my hand briefly, drew it away and hid it under the sheet. "She looks exactly as I expected her to look. You are lucky to have such a pretty wife." She slid down and pulled the sheet up to her eyes. "I'm tired. Perhaps I'll be able to sleep now."

I kept giving her the steroid treatment, the most that I could do. Her weight continued to drop, her vision grew dim, and she no longer had the strength to get out of bed. There were days when she suffered greatly. On other days her pains were lighter and my presence was less needed. It was on such a day that the local notables held a banquet in honor of the officers of the Military Government, and Major Golan asked me to attend.

We sat on rugs that still smelled of goats, and Major Golan, reclining on his cushion, belched and hiccupped, licked his fingers,

sucked his lips, pulled at his mustache and kept repeating *Ahlan v'Sahalan* ceremoniously. When the black coffee had been served, the most distinguished of our hosts rose, brandished a bunch of keys that he took out of the folds of his adorned abeya and turned to Major Golan. "Noble brother, this is a blessed day for us. We are depositing into your hands today the keys of our town. Receive them with our appreciation and affection for you are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Take them. Keep them. May Allah be always with you!"

The other Arabs got up to their feet too. Major Golan delivered a thankful speech, interspersed with the pleasantries and stock phrases that produced nods of assent. It was time for the presentation of the gifts to the other guests, the same gift to each of us—a curved blade in an ornamental silver scabbard.

My refusal to take it started a flurry of whispering among our hosts. Major Golan raised his brows, gazing at me pensively.

"Please tell them I don't wish to embarrass anybody but I can't accept it."

Stroking his mustache, he turned back to our hosts and, with impeccable finesse, made the necessary apologies. The notables acquiesced with nods of the head and tugs of the beard, and then with a handshake consented to forget the whole incident.

We were standing in the square beside our jeeps. Major Golan placed his hand on my shoulder.

"Look, young man," he said. "I thought what you did was in bad form. What did you want to prove anyway? We may not be here much longer, you know. Why leave a bad impression on them in our last days?"

He signaled to his driver and the man started up the jeep. Major Golan got in and took his seat. The jeep lurched forward and rolled off down the road into the alleys.

The sun was still strong, but twilight was fast approaching. I felt the breath of evening spreading across the water. Soon the colors would change, the air would quiver under the autumnal spell of the desert and the sea. I could slip away to the beach and stroll past the palm trees in the soft twilight. I had done that before, escaping from the hospital, watching a lonely moon climb, a hot desert moon sending its slivers of light upon the water and the white minaret. But I was in no mood for that now.

The Forsyte Saga lay closed on Muna's bedside when I entered her room. Wide awake, she answered my routine questions calmly. Yes, she felt fine. No, she had no pain. No, she didn't feel like

reading anymore. There was one more thing that I meant to ask her about, now that she seemed unusually lucid, enough so to answer it once and for all: what she knew about the thirteen dead men. But before I could put it into words, she said, "Could I ask you something now, Doctor?"

I looked at her.

"How long do you think I have?"

"I can't answer that, Muna."

"If you think I fear the truth—"

"I've no way of telling. That's the truth."

Her fingers stroked the edge of the sheet.

"Never mind. Knowing does little good, does it not?" Her lips twisted into a crooked smile. "It truly doesn't matter if I die tomorrow. I can live with that. It's the fear I can't live with. How can I overcome this fear? I don't want to disgrace myself when my time comes. That would be horrible."

Her last words stuck in her throat. Her nails dug into the sheet in a fresh spasm of pain. I injected morphine and remained at her bedside. She fell asleep and slept so deeply that she could not hear the convoys moving northwards on the thoroughfare down below. Nor could she hear the trains rushing ahead at full speed across the desert. The occupied towns further south were being evacuated one by one. We were next.

I had not seen Major Golan since the banquet. I was surprised when he showed up in the morning; he had never taken the trouble to visit the hospital before. He asked to see the patients, all of whom were Arabs from our and nearby towns, and after we had passed along the beds we went into my office.

"Well, my friend, I'm afraid the curtain is coming down." He stuffed his pipe bowl with slow, deliberate motions. "I can't tell you how rotten I feel. I can't give the order to lower our flag, it boils down to that. But an order is an order. We must be out of here by tomorrow morning."

"I don't have much to pack."

"You've done a splendid job running this hospital." He gave me an appreciative smile, as much as the pipe clutched between his lips allowed. "It may please you to know that I have recommended you for a special citation." He lit his pipe, slowly sucking on it. "By the by," he added, glancing up. "You forgot to show me your prize patient. Muna, I believe her name is. How is she?"

"She is dying."

"Sorry about that. I know you have grown fond of her." He observed me through a small cloud of smoke. "She must be suffering like hell. Isn't it possible to spare her this agony?"

"I don't know what more I can do for her."

He nodded.

"They say a doctor is half God," he said.

A big fly buzzed in through the window facing the sea and hit the wall. Major Golan shifted his gaze from me and watched the fly until it found its way out. He returned his eyes and observed me silently. Suddenly everything fell together. I stood up with a start. So that's why he stopped by. I looked at him in disbelief, no longer able to take the smell of his pipe, the smugness of his clipped mustache.

"Did you really think you could get me to do that?" I could barely control my voice. "She scares you that much?"

Major Golan plucked the pipe out of his mouth. He watched me with lips tightly pressed, eyes a hard metallic blue. The scenario was clear to me now. I tried it out.

"We pull out tomorrow. The UN takes over. They start nosing into everything that went on here. Muna thinks she saw certain things. They don't pause to think that maybe she was just hallucinating. Hell, why should they if her story can spark up their report?"

Major Golan pushed his pipe into the breast pocket of his tunic and stood up.

"You haven't heard a word of what I said," he said calmly.

He turned to the door, stopped and swung around.

"We have nothing to hide, doctor. Not one of the former rulers of this place did half as much for it as we did during our brief stay here. As for your poor patient, prolonging her suffering unnecessarily is hardly an act of charity in my book. That's all I was trying to tell you. If you can't see that, then I'm certainly sorry for you."

His eyes rested on me for another minute; the aroma of his tobacco lingered long after he had walked out.

That night Muna deteriorated sharply. I hesitated to give her another shot of morphine; her wasted body could not take it. From her bedside, I could hear the explosions outside; the Engineering Corps was blowing up military installations, and the hospital walls shook. At dawn her pain subsided, and she dozed off. I stood by the window and looked outside. An orange pink stripe of light glowed above the sea, but nearby the sky was gray with smoke, and the reek of sulphur hung in the air. In the mosque square a column of trucks lined up. Cocks crowed. Dogs barked. I returned to my room and began to pack.

The old lithograph of the pyramids that my Egyptian predecessor had left still hung on the walls of my room. His family photograph in a silver frame stood on the table, he, moustached and smiling, with his young wife and two children. He'd had no time to take it with him. I had not touched it. I had not changed anything. When he returned, he would find the room exactly as he had left it.

I finished packing and managed to get some sleep. The room was flooded with light when I awoke. From down below came the sound of voices in a Slavic tongue. I got up and crossed to the window. There were three white command cars with UN soldiers in blue uniforms in the hospital yard. On the other side of the yard, near the gate, our two ambulances stood ready to leave.

When I made my last round the patients seized my hand and kissed it. Some cried openly. I didn't see Sergeant Bashan until I entered Muna's room. He was pulling the syringe out of Muna's arm and wiping it with cotton wool.

"What the hell are you doing?" I roared.

"She was writhing in pain. She begged me to give her a shot. So I did."

"You did!"

"What's the fuss?" He ambled out, rubbing his hand on his khaki pants. "All I did was ease her last moments."

I took her hand. Her pulse was almost imperceptible. Her lips trembled in an attempted smile. As she viewed me through a rapidly thickening haze, her facial muscles twitched. I bent over to catch what she tried to tell me. No sound came. Her face slackened. Her hand felt limp, vacant. I put it down.

I went out of the room and walked along the corridor. I picked up my bag and came down the stairs to the hospital gate. Sergeant Bashan and the orderlies were seated in the second ambulance. The driver of the first ambulance had kept the seat next to him for me. When I got in he produced a packet of lemon drops and held it out. I made no move. He pushed the packet into my hand.

"What about you?"

He tapped his shirt pocket. "There's enough here to see me through the desert."

The ambulance groaned and started moving out of the hospital yard. I looked in the rearview mirror. The other ambulance was following closely. As we drove out of the gate, the UN soldiers jumped out of their white cars and began running up the stairs and into the hospital.

John Hildebidle

.240, LIFETIME

After five or six tries she must have realized she couldn't reach Kelly, so she called the hotel and got the night clerk to find somebody. The only one there of course was George the Mormon kid, who was the last guy in the world to send around to bars, but she had no choice. It took George a long time, and he got himself well lost and then found by the cops, who were about to pinch him until they saw his wide-eyed look and helped him instead. So when Kelly looked up from the bar where he was trying to show the barmaid the difference between a slider and a screwball, George had two cops in tow and it looked a little like a temperance raid. The cops hung around figuring maybe somebody would need a ride. George said to Kelly, "Your wife called," and Kelly waited, since there had to be more message than that to deserve all this fanfare. "Jesus," Kelly said (George winced), "she could have waited until morning. You got a dime?"

"You took your time," she said. "You mean the little saint took his time," Kelly said; "I been here having a couple of beers." "A couple," she said, "you're gonna put on weight again." "It's hot enough here to sweat it off me. You just wanted to know what brand was I drinking?" "It's Ricky. He's got those headaches again." "Kid his age falls down often enough to have a headache full time. You want me to come home and give him the aspirin? Six hours on the bus?" "But it hurts him, you know? It's serious, I tell you." "So take him to the doctor. Jesus. I got things on my mind. Take him to the goddamn doctor and get him a pill or something. You think you can handle that Jo-An?" "This is our kid we're talking about and not the car or the wash machine or something. You know? Maybe he's sick." "And maybe it's the hot weather and maybe it's somebody chucked a rock at him in the park and maybe it's just a headache like I'm getting from all this. You take him in the morning and I'll call just before game time, o.k.? You take him. And you sleep a little, you hear?" "I hear."

It only occurred to him later that she hadn't even asked how the game went. The thought woke him up, and he lay there listening to Caldwell snoring. It was hard enough without worrying. He'd told her often enough. A goddamn headache and she calls out the Marines.

He didn't need that. He just didn't *need* that. He fell back to sleep once a breeze came up, and since they weren't working out until two he slept right through breakfast and looked over the papers at lunch. The local rag didn't even have a box score and only wanted to talk about this kid pitcher Kelly would have had three hits off of if his bat hadn't broken once and if the shortstop hadn't gotten lucky one other time. He found a day-old New York paper too. The big club was there, and there was lots of ink about it, the rivalry and all. He read the stories his own way, looking for pulled muscles or maybe somebody was 0-for-20 and just what they could use was a right-hand bat. But the big club was winning and healthy and it was like being locked up. One goddamn groin pull was all he needed, somewhere up the line so they called somebody up and he moved to triple-A where he ought to be anyway, and goodbye tanktown eat my dust. It was goddamn well time.

He had a good day in batting practice even though Manny kept bitching at him about keep your hands back—Manny who spent maybe four days in the bigs once and if he was lucky could hit his hat size in a slow-pitch league. The Skip said maybe Kelly should get in some work at third, so he spent half an hour taking ground balls that went every which way off the rocks. One caught him over the ear and he'd had enough; now he had a headache of his own, right? And Caldwell opened his big mouth and said, "What time you get in last night?" right in front of the Skip, who gave Kelly a look like maybe he'd been out catting all night. By four o'clock the air was heavy as peanut butter and they all went back to the hotel for a nap. Kelly tossed around dreaming of baseballs that bounced and hopped with a mad life of their own.

The Skip sat him down that night even though he'd eaten this pitcher like Wheaties the last time through. They wanted to get a good look at the college boy they'd just signed, who had a pretty swing and already smiled all the time like he was posing for the gum cards. By the bottom of the third they were down six and the college kid kept smiling while he struck out on a pitch that was more charity than fast ball. Kelly remembered the phone call and told the Skip he had to pee, which meant a walk back across the parking lot to a Citgo station. There was no phone there so he went down the block to a booth. Nobody answered at home or at her sister's either, and Kelly could see them all out somewhere eating hot fudge sundaes and who the hell cared about him now? On the way back to the park some old lady passed, walking her dog, and stared at him as if his fly were

down or maybe he'd just escaped from somewhere. Jesus. The Skip didn't seem to notice whether Kelly was back or not, and they were down ten by the time Kelly got an at-bat, eighth inning, guy on third. He took one good cut and felt something grab in the back of his shoulder; and when he swung the next time he got all of it but the ball died in short left. The college kid had two bloop hits and got lucky on a fly ball anyone else could have pitched a tent under but he had to grab falling down to make it look hard. Jesus. Kelly's shoulder settled into a dim persistent ache below his shoulder blade; he knew it would keep him up so he went back to the fat lady's bar and had a couple of bourbons before his three beers and played Willy Nelson on the juke. When he got to the hotel the beers hadn't touched his sore shoulder. There was a note in Caldwell's bad spelling stuck on the door: "Call your wive." Kelly decided it was too late anyway, and hadn't he tried? He lay down with a pillow propping his shoulder and coasted to sleep on the soft edge of the bourbon.

She woke him up. Six A.M. "Kelly, he's sick. In hospital sick, tests and all. Kelly they're talking about a tumor for God's sake. They're talking about let's have a few tests and see where we are and when is your husband due back and it's really early to tell so don't worry. Kelly, I think he's dying for God's sake. Dying, you know?" Jesus.

The first bus left at noon. The Skip didn't make any fuss when he told him "family trouble." It burned Kelly a little that it was no big deal for the one decent ballplayer on the team to take an indefinite powder. The bus stopped everywhere, six hours when he could have driven it in two or three. The only seat he could find was next to a bald-headed guy with a withered arm who wanted to talk, about anything. Kelly tried to shut him up by saying he'd been up all night worrying about his sick kid, but that just started the guy going on diseases. Kelly had a hotdog and three beers in a diner next to the bus station in some dim burg just over the Berkshires. When he got back to his seat the guy was still talking. The last hour or so Kelly finally managed to sleep. He called from the bus station and his sister-in-law Verna came to get him and to chew his ear off about why didn't he call last night. It was like being locked in the car with a snake. When she was mad she drove even worse than usual.

In the lobby they were all there, clustered on a couch and a couple of chairs: Jo-An's Aunt Esther and Uncle Harry, and the neighbors who were Ricky's godparents, and the guy Verna was seeing, who looked just as bad as her ex-husband Frankie the Bastard

but who was at least the only one not on the verge of tears. Jo-An was upstairs, they said, with Ricky until they gave him something to sleep and then the doctor could see them. At least nobody felt like talking. Esther grabbed Kelly's hand so tight he thought she might crack his knuckles. He sat on the arm of one of the chairs, his legs tight from sitting all day and his head a little thick from the beers and his shoulder still stiff. There was faint bouncy music coming from somewhere, and the place smelled of floorwax and flower arrangements and Harry's cigar. Kelly needed to pee but Esther wasn't about to let go of his hand. Even though the lobby was cool, almost too cool, Kelly felt sweat running down under his arms and between his legs. He was somehow too large for the room, as if the chair were shrinking under him and everything else along with it, until it all broke under his weight. He could not sit still any longer; the skin of his back tightened as if he were being dragged up by a crane. He pried his hand loose from Esther and found the men's room; safely inside, he took off his shirt and wiped himself down with a wet paper towel.

Jo-An's face was still set in the placid grin she'd been using to help Ricky get to sleep, but her body slumped and her hair was all limp. She and Kelly sat in chairs covered with a prickly fabric that went right through his shirt so that he had to concentrate on keeping still. She held his hand as tightly as Esther had, listening to the smooth-faced doctor, who was too young and looked pretty tired himself. Kelly could not follow what he was saying. It was all long words and question marks, *early to tell, looks serious but more tests, a lot of developments lately*. . . . Kelly felt himself drifting backward until he was safely a mile or so away and could see it all through powerful binoculars: the pink-cheeked doctor playing with a toy plastic head that came apart. If he could drift just a little farther it would go away; but his wife's hand kept him tethered and the doctor's voice could just carry across the distance: "Mostly it's a wait-and-see proposition, I'm afraid. There's a fellow in Boston who might be able to tell us more, but let's see what we can find out here first, okay? And we'll try to keep" — his eyes went down to the open file in front of him — "Richard comfortable." "Ricky," Jo-An said, "we call him Ricky." "Right," the doctor said, as if she'd passed a test, "of course. Now you two try to get some rest as well."

She was going to spend the night on a cot set up in Ricky's room. Now that she had hauled Kelly back, one way or another, she seemed not very concerned about his being there; once the doctor

had smiled them out of his office she let go of Kelly's hand and told the group in the lobby and set Esther off crying again. But at least it was enough to send them all home for the night. Jo-An did not resemble the crying woman Kelly was used to, and having come back ready to face the annoyance of her bawling, he felt now at loose ends. He said he'd take the car home and sleep there, and she handed over the keys without any argument.

He was all the way home and showered and sitting in front of some Western movie with two sixteen-ounce beers poured into a pitcher and then forgotten about long enough to go flat before he let himself admit that he did not, would not want to see Ricky—even if he didn't look any different, yet except maybe a little pale the way hospitals always make you look and maybe with bandaids in odd places where they'd taken blood and Jesus! maybe even tubes running out his arms and a silly plastic bracelet marking him like a convict or a Pekinese. Jo-An could sit there as long as she wanted and hold Ricky's hand by the hour and convince him that Jell-O on a tray was a big deal and play checkers bad enough for him to win. She was used to him, and Ricky was used to her, and where did that leave Kelly anyhow? She owned the kid and only loaned him out now and then to have a catch or to ask, the morning after a home game, "You get a hit?" until it got on Kelly's nerves, since he didn't believe it was any more than something Jo-An had made the kid do. There were even times, coming back after a long road trip, when the only thing Ricky made him feel was annoyed, like a pet dog that wouldn't be trained. Of course Kelly loved him; what was he, abnormal or something? You loved your son. But he always made Kelly feel in the way. Five years old and Kelly still couldn't see anything in him that looked familiar. Sick he'd be worse. And she'd be brave and all. And Kelly would be too loud or something and they'd send him for a milkshake so that they could take a deep breath. Jesus.

He woke up with a stiff neck from sleeping twisted into the chair. The TV was still on; some fag in tights was prancing around yakking about a good body. Jesus. It was after ten o'clock and he put in a call to the Skip to let him know it would be a couple of days at least. The Skip said, "Yeah. You take care," which is just what he said when he didn't want to talk any more to some dim reporter. Kelly ate two peanut butter sandwiches while he drove and stopped on the way to get a newspaper. They had a big spread on "Who's Who in the Minors" but it barely got deeper than triple-A and there were four or five guys listed as hot prospects that Kelly could eat alive any Tuesday. All it

did was get his blood pressure up, so when he went into the hospital lobby and saw Verna, it was just about what he expected. She was chainsmoking Trues, and sweet as ever. "Nice you could drop in," she said, and let a cigarette ash collapse on to the sleeve of her dress. "I couldn't sleep much and then dozed off, you know?" Kelly said. "No big deal," she said, "everybody else is sleeping like babies." "Verna, just this once don't be a bitch, okay? I got a couple things on my mind." "You find any time to think about Ricky? Or just jockstraps?" "Verna, I'm telling you I don't need this. I don't. I'm going upstairs." "He's down getting some test. You might as well stay here." "For the company?" "You could listen for once to somebody who isn't sweating." "Verna, don't start." "Don't start? Don't start? You want to run around all the time pretending you're still Mr. Little League of 1965 and we should all just clap? Ricky could use a father right now who works for a living." "I work. What the hell do you know about it? I work and just because I'm good at something. . . ." "Yeah. I read about it in the papers. You could be down at the lumberyard right now and not waiting for some Puerto Rican to break a leg so you can get your big chance." "I could be down at the lumberyard and happy just like Frankie the Bastard was, huh? What have you ever done that you didn't fuck up?" He said that louder than he meant to and the mousy old lady at the information desk looked up and shushed him. He went off to get a cup of coffee. Verna lit another cigarette, with that look she always had, like she'd just proved something.

He was on his fifth cup of coffee when Verna came to find him. "You could see him now," she said, and then waited a second and almost whispered, "hotshot." He let that go and went upstairs. Jo-An sat next to Ricky's bed, holding his hand. From the doorway they looked as still as a poster photograph: *give so more may live* and all that. He waited to see if they noticed. A nurse had to squeeze past him with some medicine or other and said *excuse me* as if he should have known better than to get in the way. Jo-An couldn't take her eyes off the boy but Ricky looked over and smiled. "Hey, Rick-o," Kelly said, and stood near the bed. "Hey," Ricky said, "you get the day off?" "Yeah," Kelly said, "to see you." Kelly knew he should ruffle the kid's hair or something but he couldn't touch him; his hand just would not move so he stood there, with his arms crossed and each hand stuck under an armpit, and smiled. There were no tubes or bandaids but Ricky was pale and in a few minutes he fell asleep. Kelly could see that Jo-An was maybe going to let herself cry, while Ricky wouldn't notice, and Kelly said he needed to pee and got the hell out of there.

By late afternoon he'd ridden around a good deal and then settled in a bar where the game of the week was on, but with the sound turned off so you didn't have to listen to some banjo-hitter with a pot-belly pretend to know what was what. It was the Dodgers and San Diego, but nobody seemed sure who was ahead. This kid was pitching who might as well have been lobbing beachballs. Kelly could just feel how hard it would be to wait and then how sweet it would be to have waited so his bat caught the ball just when his hips were driving, and even with his head down like Manny kept yelling at him to do, he'd *know* where it was headed, and nobody going to catch it either. One fat one after another the kid pitcher threw; but nobody was doing much with it. Kelly had three beers pretty fast and then two more and then began to lose patience with a skinny guy at the end of the bar who was sure that curveballs never curved and everybody in the bigs was a hophead and anybody with a brain wouldn't need to play baseball anyhow, and wasn't it all for the money and. . . . Kelly left before he took a poke at the guy, because what did he know? You didn't know unless you could do it, and if you could do it there was nothing else. He imagined locking the skinny guy and Verna into a shed down at the lumberyard and letting them use all that jaw power for roughing out planks. It was a bright warm evening and he felt like driving some more, maybe even driving back to surprise the Skip and getting one good lick in if the game was running long, but he forgot where they were now—Attleboro? Bridgeport? Manchester? some dim burg, and nowhere near where he deserved to be. When the siren started up he didn't really notice, until the cruiser was alongside waving him over; and when the cop said *seventy-five* Kelly didn't believe it and started to explain. The cop wasn't buying and asked if Kelly had been drinking, so Kelly could see where it was headed, and damned if he'd let one more thing come down. It really wasn't a punch at all, just a push, sort of, but the damn cop had a short fuse. The jail cell smelled like it was where they emptied the pisser. They let him make one phone call and then another trying to get somebody to find Jo-An at the hospital. When he finally talked to her she was miles and miles away. "I don't have time to take care of both of you, you know?" she said; and he said, "I know but they say somebody's got to come get me," and she said, "Maybe Verna," and he said, "Jesus!" "Then you can stay, I guess," she said, and hung up.

They let him out in the morning, but with no license and they'd keep the car keys until somebody sensible showed up. There was a bus that ran downtown and then another one out to the hospital; peo-

ple kept looking at him, so he must have been a mess. He washed up a little in the men's room at the hospital, but he did look like one of those guys who always sit way out in right field, sipping from a brown bag. He went up to Ricky's room. Jo-An wasn't there, or Verna either thank God; nobody but Ricky in fact, and he was sleeping again. Kelly looked down at him, at the skinny arms and the mouth that was partway open, the nose that was finally starting to look like somebody's—Kelly's? at least a real nose, and not just a kid's—and the hair that was always a little too long and lay spread out on the pillow. It was so soft you couldn't help but take a little bit of it between your thumb and finger, so soft. "I just don't know," Kelly said, he supposed to Ricky. The hair was so fine and the head underneath it smaller than he'd remembered and as soft as if it were wrapped in silk. "Jesus," Kelly said; and only realized he'd been crying from the spots his tears left on the sheet.

* * *

It was two years, eight months, and six or seven days before he came back. He'd thought maybe it would be three weeks or so, long enough for things to settle and maybe the Skip would wise up too, and his shoulder would be good and healed. But after three weeks he was still in the Y in New York and still had a couple of bucks left from what he'd taken out of the checking account, and he'd figured out that it was chuck it all or chuck nothing. So he headed south. In Greensboro he worked midnight-to-breakfast in an all-night grocery, which was good quiet work and left him the days to laze around and even for a while to talk his way into a fast-pitch softball league. But that felt too fake, and in the winter the town was pretty dead. Then there was a trucker in Little Rock who needed a fill-in driver, and finally repossessing cars in Miami, damn good work too and you couldn't complain about the climate. Until one day this huge Black dingo started waving a gun and Kelly thought maybe he was going to die over a '69 Fleetwood with a rebuilt body and lime-green suede upholstery. Anyway he had enough money by then to pay back what he'd taken with him (it was his money to begin with but he thought it would help if there were no arguments about paying his own way). The guy he was working for tipped him off to a Toyota with a lot of body-rot but an engine that still sounded new, and he drove the whole way back in three days.

He figured he'd call first. He knew her voice of course but he said *Jo-An*? as if maybe he didn't. She hung up, so at least she hadn't

forgotten him. He supposed he should ask about Ricky. When he called the second time he started talking very fast as soon as someone picked up the phone: "Look don't hang up I just wanted to know how he is and all so don't hang up it was only a couple hundred I took and I got it to put back and we can start again fresh you know? because I really had some time to think anyway Verna will be happy to know I gave up ball-playing and how are you anyway?" When he stopped for a breath, the line stayed open for a minute while he tried to think of what else to say. Then Verna's voice said, "You shit," and she hung up.

He got a room at the Y and called this guy he'd been to high school with, who always needed people to work nights as watchmen. After a couple of weeks he was feeling pretty well set up. And he knew not to ask about Ricky any more, but that didn't really surprise him. It was good to be back, although there were people who gave him the grim-face treatment, probably because Verna had spent the whole time telling everybody just what she thought. But it was good to be back, even though the weather was pretty poor, icy and all. He kept expecting to run into Jo-An at the mall or somewhere but it never happened. He drove past the house once to see how things looked. A new paint job wouldn't hurt but he could do that himself in the summer. He stopped the car and just sat for a while; long enough for the neighbors to start looking out, as if maybe they should call the police. Even on a day when there was a thin icy rain falling and sooty snow stacked in the gutters and somebody's trashcan rolling back and forth in the wind, making a hell of a racket, he felt good. They really could start over; and a new Ricky, too, right? Although they'd call him something else; no use raking up the past and all. After all you had to go on.

He stopped in finally on a Sunday when he was pretty sure she'd be there. Verna's guy opened the door—he had a ring on the right finger, so it looked like she'd finally suckered him into taking Frankie the Bastard's place—and Verna and Jo-An were watching some movie on TV. Verna's guy—damned if he could remember his name, and nobody was making introductions—stood there looking as if he were making his choice between leaving and pasting Kelly one, just to show who was in charge. Jo-An smoked faster than Verna and wouldn't take her eyes off the TV set. Verna said, "Well well, the lord and master," but Kelly had learned a few things about his temper. "I brought along some beers," he said, and went to the kitchen for glasses. When he came back nobody had moved. There was an

empty space on the wall where the picture of the three of them had hung, but otherwise the room was the same. She hadn't even moved the furniture, so it was like she was waiting for him the whole time. She was smoking too much but that was just nerves. "You look good," he said; which was mostly true, except her neck had this stringy look he'd never noticed before. Still nobody was talking except the TV. He didn't quite know whether to sit down or not. "Hey look I know it'll take a little time and all but maybe we could at least talk, okay?" he said. But Jo-An was even watching the commercials. "All right," he said, "so I could have written or something or called but what's done is done. Jesus. Maybe like they say I needed to grow up a little, you know? I can see that." He kept almost expecting Ricky to come down the hall. Jo-An lit her fourth cigarette. Verna's guy just stood there, rocking slightly on his heels. Verna had this grin on her face that made her look even more like a raccoon than ever. Kelly drank his beer. "So maybe I didn't spend enough time around here and all. That's over. We've got to go on living, right? I had to figure out a few things. Now at least we've got each other, right? Jesus. Will somebody fucking say something?" Verna laughed and said, "You're happier talking to yourself anyway." Verna's guy said, "I should throw him out?" but Jo-An finally looked at Kelly and shook her head. "It's his beer and his house. Let him have it. I'll come sleep in your spare room." It took her all of ten minutes to pack, and she left without even turning off the TV.

He didn't believe in ghosts and anyway Ricky's old room was the one place she'd changed, stripping down the wallpaper with the bears and firetrucks, and replacing the old furniture with one of those foam rubber couches that fold out into a bed. But Kelly kept the door closed anyway. And he couldn't see sleeping in their room either, so he sacked out the first night on the living room sofa. In fact before long he was pretty much living in that one room. Verna's guy stopped back twice to get more of Jo-An's things. Kelly figured he could wait it out. He filled in on weekends at the sporting-goods store at the mall, and he was putting some money in the bank, toward the paint job and maybe he'd add a room at the back like they'd always talked about doing. He didn't waste time calling her because he was sure Verna would answer the phone. By spring he was really feeling settled back. The papers were full of spring-training stories but even that didn't bother him any more. The weather turned hot for a week or so and he was thinking about maybe putting in a garden. Then Jo-An showed up with the divorce papers. Jesus. But if she'd wanted that

why wait until he came back? She wouldn't come in so they talked on the front stoop. "Come on," Kelly said, "this has got to be Verna's idea." "You don't know one thing, Kelly. Not one thing," she said. "I know about us. Jesus. We've got a lot of years together, you know?" "And five or so of them with Ricky and a couple when you were God knows where, and we don't need any more." "You think I'm not sorry about Ricky too? You think that?" "You think maybe it was a little different being here?" "I said I was sorry. Jesus. I give up baseball and I got two jobs now and plans for the house and all, and all we've got to do is pick up the pieces." "No way." "Come on, now. You're what I've got and vice versa. Jesus. I didn't have to come back. Give me a little credit anyway." "Right now I wouldn't give you a cold." "But if you go what else have I got?" "You've got you, I guess. Whatever that's worth." While she walked down to the bus stop at the corner he just stood there feeling as if he ought to break something.

That night, and for the first time, Kelly dreamed about Ricky. Kelly himself was playing ball again, in a vast well-painted park unlike any he'd ever seen. It was all so vivid and perfect: the ball white and unmarked, the dirt of the infield like velvet, the grass a deep rich green even in the full high sun. He was at his best, the ball flying from his bat in a pure line toward the wall, and at the same moment he ran, effortlessly, to catch it: he was everyone on the field, a team of lithe, precise, graceful men, bright with the sweat of easy accomplishment. He looked up and Ricky was watching; older, no longer a child, but still Ricky, with the same soft hair, watching intently but without expression. Again the ball flew from Kelly's bat and again he himself was the one catching it, on the dead run; and again and again and again, with Ricky still the only onlooker, still without expression, still unamazed by the grace of what was before him. On and on the game went, never changing; nor did the sun move or the air turn to the heavier warmth of late afternoon, nor did Kelly tire. On and on he played, each time without flaw or hesitation. Then he noticed that Ricky had stood up and turned away and was leaving, without another look. Kelly called out to him but there was no answer. The boy, tall and angular, walked to the exit and then down into the dark tunnel and was gone, and still Kelly played on and on and on, his body now heavy and inadequate, his wind short, the uniform heavy on his shoulders, his arms, when he looked down, wholly changed: mottled, veiny, old, thin but too heavy to raise to wave or beckon.

Ronald Radosh

NICARAGUAN MYTHS

At the time of this writing, the Sandinista front which governs Nicaragua has just announced the total suspension of all civil liberties and political rights, including what they call the right “to seek, receive and spread information and ideas.” One can imagine the frustration felt by Interior Minister Tomás Borge, who must bemoan his inability to prevent the holding of ideas — and who must be content with using his authority to implement the new edict. The friends of the Nicaraguan Revolution have argued, as some U.S. citizens told Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega at New York’s Ethical Culture Society, that such restrictions on liberty were a necessary temporary measure, solely the result of the United States sponsored aggression against the country and its quest for independence.

With the appearance of Shirley Christian’s important new book,¹ there is no longer any excuse for advancing that particular argument. Her main thesis, proved through close analysis of how the Sandinistas came to power, and what they did once in power, shows conclusively that “the leaders of the Sandinista Front intended to establish a Leninist system from the day they marched into Managua, whether they called it that or not. Their goal was to assure themselves the means to control nearly every aspect of Nicaraguan life, from beans and rice to religion.” Christian points in particular to two documents: the text of a report on the secret September 1979 meeting of eighty-one top Sandinistas, which made clear that the alliance with non-Marxist opponents of Somoza was only an “alliance of convenience.” The FSLN leaders stressed the need “to appear reasonable during” the “intermediate” period, after which they would move at more appropriate moments to institute a Cuban-Soviet model state structure. The second document cited is the speech of army commander Humberto Ortega to his troops in 1981, the key portions of which were expurgated for public citation by the FSLN, but in which the chief *commandante* told his troops, “We are guided by the scientific doctrine of the revolution, by Marxism-Leninism . . . the instrument of anal-

1. *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family*. By Shirley Christian. Random House. \$19.95.

ysis of our Vanguard for understanding the historic process and for carrying out the revolution."

It is this disclosure by Christian that so many on the political left find most disturbing and seem unable to face up to. Honest observers can only second the judgment of Timothy Garton Ash, who wrote that Christian "provides a wealth of detail to demonstrate . . . beyond reasonable doubt, that the Sandinistas set out from the start to gain for themselves as much power as possible, permanently, and were prepared from the start to use lies, lawlessness and violence against their political opponents when these seemed necessary to achieve that end." Yet, to call the Sandinistas Marxist-Leninist is somehow seen as red-baiting by many on the American left, an attempt to pigeonhole revolutionaries they persist in viewing as simple pragmatists trying to create a just order. Evidently, to take the Sandinista's own words as to what doctrine they adhere to is forbidden and is considered an example of the new McCarthyism.

Christian has provided the necessary path to understanding—and because she has done this with such fine attention to detail, she has understandably become the *bête noire* of the left—which has condemned her as a Reaganite. George Black of the North American Congress on Latin America portrayed her book as a fraud in the pages of the left-wing *Nation*. That publication's star columnist, Alexander Cockburn, whose politics are never too far from those of an unreconstructed Stalinist, spent almost two of his biweekly columns using her as proof of how *The New York Times* has shifted far to the right. Writing in the ostensibly democratic socialist *In These Times*, Cornell University Professor Elden Kenworthy dismissed Christian as a reporter who is simply "pure Reagan," since she does not understand that postelection Nicaragua has changed "in the direction of greater conformity to liberal democratic practices." (Kenworthy, undoubtedly, will be able to come up with the usual rationalizations for the new repression.)

As one might expect, film director Saul Landau, for decades the leading United States apologist for Fidel Castro, joined the chorus by predicting in *The Progressive* that Christian "might one day feel ashamed of herself, for she has done a disservice to journalism." Charging that Christian might as well have "ghostwritten for President Reagan," Landau, who two years ago explained in an article that civil liberties were not necessary in revolutionary countries where they were mere bourgeois luxuries, now condemns Christian's book as "the propaganda part" of the United States war. The charge has

been echoed by more prominent and influential writers. Pete Hamill, writing in the pages of *The Village Voice*, branded Christian “the best friend the Nicaraguan contras [have] in American journalism.” Accusing her of “taking sides,” Hamill suggested that she should be writing a column about Central America, not “posing as an objective reporter.”

It is not surprising Hamill is not receptive to Christian’s work. His own six-part series on Nicaragua, appearing in the *New York Daily News*, heralded the Sandinistas for being “rock-’n’-roll revolutionaries” and for carrying off the “only true victory of the New Left.” A writer who characterizes a revolution on the basis of the music its rank and file listens to thinks he has grounds on which to criticize one of the best reporters writing on Central America. Perhaps it is not surprising that Christian’s detractors never seem to mention that among her most vociferous critics is General Pinochet of Chile, who has made Christian *persona non grata* as a result of her reporting in that country.

When a writer comes under attack from virtually every major left-liberal organ of thought in this country, it is perhaps a sign that her book is so disturbing and thorough that one cannot help but deal seriously with its contents. And it is the contents and revelations in her book that must make the ardent defenders of the Sandinistas take pause. Those who believe that only the FSLN and its followers opposed Somoza will be amazed to find that under the dictator’s realm, political space still existed in Nicaragua, and that the non-Sandinista opponents of Somoza played as much and at times a greater and more effective role than that of the advocates of guerrilla struggle.

One of the major mechanisms for maintaining power is the re-writing of history, something at which the Sandinistas have become adept. Since Shirley Christian sets the record straight, for this reason alone her book is a necessity. It is a solid dispeller of major myths propagated by Western supporters of the Sandinistas—that the Sandinistas favor a democratic, pluralist and nonaligned nation, independent of any of the superpowers, and that tough measures they have adapted all would be withdrawn if not for United States aggression. Christian shows that, indeed, the inspiration and political voice of the current generation of FSLN leadership came from the most sectarian Marxist currents of the early 1960s. The martyred founder of the FSLN, Carlos Fonseca Amador, she notes, “spent much of 1957 in the Soviet Union and East Germany.” His subsequent pamphlet, *A Nicaraguan in Moscow*, “depicted the Soviet system as a future

model for Latin America.” To those who believe that the Marxism of the Sandinistas is purely native, Christian’s reporting must be an eye-opener. Indeed, her work suggests that part of the Sandinistas’ problem is that their politics came from two isolated sources—the guerrilla struggle in the hills and in exile, and the sectarian pro-Soviet Marxism of the Cuban Communists and the Soviets.

There were, of course, non-communists among the guerrilla fighters. Today, they are in exile or, in some cases, supporting the *contras*. One of the shockers in her book is her account of how the most prominent and famous Sandinista hero, Edén Pastora Gómez (who carried out the 1978 raid on the National Palace), was treated after he made the difficult decision to leave his country because of political differences. Pastora had gone to Panama to consult his friend General Omar Torrijos, precisely at the time the General died in a plane crash. Pastora was supposed to have accompanied him on that fatal trip, and Pastora suspected foul play that was aimed at him. Immediately after, Pastora was tricked into a meeting in Panama with the Sandinista Interior Minister Tomás Borge—who quickly captured Pastora and took him to Cuba, where he was put under house arrest for months. Pastora had not attempted to take up arms when he first quit—but any public role by him was seen by the Sandinistas as a threat they could not tolerate.

The Sandinistas like to portray the coalition of which they were a part as made up of different tendencies, some Marxist, but others Catholic and some even moderate democratically-oriented socialists. What Christian shows is that whatever differences and factions developed had to do with the question of how to reach power, not that of how to govern. Indeed, one is struck by how many noncommunists could be recruited to join the FSLN as combatants, and how many even fought in more battles than those who currently run the country. Thus we learn about the young banker Alfredo Cesar, who became an FSLN combatant, later President of the Central Bank, who eventually joined other democrats in exile in 1983. And Pastora, it turns out, did more actual fighting than other major Sandinistas, some of whom led the movement from a somewhat comfortable exile in Costa Rica.

There were non-Marxists allied with the Sandinistas. But as former Ambassador to the United States Arturo Cruz put it, moderates were of use to the FSLN, since they allowed their presence to give the appearance of a pluralist society. After polarization set in, Cruz pointed out, opponents of the FSLN saw the moderates as a

force legitimizing totalitarianism, and the Sandinistas saw them as an obstacle to consolidation of power. Though the goal of the FSLN *commandantes* was a Soviet style state, to this day, when asked whether they are Marxists, even the most hardline Stalinists in the leadership offer evasive answers and talk of their Christian orientation and their pragmatism. Thus Bayardo Arce, whom Christian correctly calls “the *commandante* most concerned with matters of ideology and creation of the Leninist structure in Nicaragua,” gave a secret speech before the 1985 elections, in which he proclaimed the elections as “bothersome,” since the real goals of the Revolution were “the power to enforce . . . precisely what constitutes the defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Arce went on to announce that they would never abandon their “strategic links with the Soviet Union” or agree to develop what he derided as “bourgeois democracy.” Eventually, he told his Marxist audience, they would eliminate this “facade of pluralism,” when its usefulness came to an end. Yet it was this same Arce who, in an interview with Diedre English, in a special Nicaragua issue of *Mother Jones*, told his willing listener that Sandinismo was so pragmatic that it could at once be called Marxist-Leninist, Christian and liberal, and that he wished “to include the methods of the U.S. electoral system the next time we have elections.” A reporter who had read Christian’s book beforehand, one would hope, would have known not to ask Bayardo Arce about what the ideology of the FSLN leaders is.

Moreover, Christian’s book touches upon the often stated belief that the Sandinistas were pushed into Soviet hands and towards internal repression by the aggressive policy of the United States. The harsh United States stance under Reagan certainly allowed the Sandinistas internal leverage to move in the direction their leaders already desired — feeding into the hands of the toughest hard-liners in Managua, but it is clear that their goals were set from the start. Christian shows that the very first Cuban military and Bulgarian and East German economic and state security advisors arrived in Managua the first week of the Revolution. As for the United States, the Carter administration and Ambassador Lawrence Pezzullo in particular offered a welcome hand to the new Revolution. She quotes Pezzullo: “You either took a positive position of trying to be helpful and trying to build a new relationship or you’d be sitting around wringing your hands forever.” What Pezzullo did was to befriend the Sandinista leaders, in particular agricultural minister Jaime Wheelock. While the Sandinistas were beginning to make “the United States the main culprit for everything that they found wrong with the world,” the

United States under Carter sought to use aid as leverage with which to reenforce the political role of the moderate democrats within the regime, men like Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo. Despite a United Nations speech in which Daniel Ortega took positions “that were anti-United States, anti-Chinese and pro-Soviet,” the State Department made a formal request to Congress for seventy-five million dollars in supplemental funds to Nicaragua — an amount on top of other monies that were extended, such as eight million dollars in programmed funds for Nicaragua’s National Bank, when it was almost without any hard currency. The purpose, as the liberal diplomat Viron Vaky put it, was “justified by the need to strengthen and support moderates in the government, as well as to give the private sector and other nongovernmental groups a chance to survive.”

When the rupture between the United States and Nicaragua finally came, it was over Sandinista refusal to end direct aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas — aid which they saw as part of their revolutionary responsibilities — although publicly, they denied giving it. Indeed, as I have indicated, long before Reagan was President, the Sandinistas had moved to consolidate their power along classic Leninist lines. They had imposed censorship of the press, created the neighborhood committees to impose surveillance, modeled on the Castroite model existing in Cuba, and built up a strong and fully equipped armed force — tied directly to the Sandinista party, rather than to the nation as a whole.

All of this created an internal polarization in Nicaragua, resulting, it must be emphasized, not from American aggression, but from the policies pursued by the FSLN. The eventual outcome had to be a civil war, as former supporters who wished the Revolution well found no alternative but to support the very type of armed struggle the FSLN had once engaged in against Somoza. To gain power, the Sandinistas had shrewdly used the support of moderate political leaders and members of the private sector, such as Ramiro Gurdian, who told Christian that he had expected as a result of the Revolution “a free society, with free press, with elections, with a very good legal system.” After all, Gurdian explained to Christian, democratic Latin American nations and social democrats like Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez were among the major backers of the FSLN.

Once the CIA began to establish and support the *contras*, using the convenient fiction that their goal was not to overthrow the Sandinistas, but only to interfere with arms shipments to Salvadoran guerrillas, that policy provided ample opportunity for the FSLN to

use the CIA financed war to move ahead with their preordained agenda of Leninization. The Reagan policy worked to isolate democratic opponents of the regime within Nicaragua, who were quickly branded as subversive *contras* by the FSLN. Yet examination of Sandinista repression reveals that it has little to do with armed struggle. The absurd censorship of *La Prensa*, for example, exists primarily to shut off any flow of information that would erode the legitimacy of the regime. Thus, at the time of the crushing of Solidarity in Poland, the censors gave orders that coverage had to reflect the position taken by TASS or by the Cuban *Prensa Latina*.

Christian also reveals the limitation of programs otherwise heralded with much enthusiasm by the Revolution's defenders. The agricultural reform, she notes, "concentrated on the ideological formation of peasants and small landowners and their acceptance of the FSLN view of things," particularly since the ranks of the *contras* came from peasants who wanted their own land and feared confiscation by the State. An effort was made to destroy the unions of the urban workers—some quite radical and led by the Communists—and force the urban working class into a new Sandinista labor federation. Strikes were declared illegal, and wage increases forbidden. Signs of militancy were often met by the calling out of the Sandinista goon squads—the so-called *turbas* or "divine mobs," whose readiness for action included bashing heads with lead pipes and breaking picket lines. The literacy campaign, which was modeled on the Cuban effort, scored some success. But here too Christian emphasizes that its graduates were left with "skills equivalent to only the first year or two of primary school," barely enough to read and interpret primitive FSLN propaganda.

If there is a problem with Christian's book, it lies in those sections in which she discusses policy alternatives. Like critics of the left, Christian does not seem to realize that the nature of the Sandinista regime is a question separate from consideration of policy alternatives to be taken towards Nicaragua. Whatever the harsh reality of the internal Nicaraguan system, this does not mean that the Reagan policy of seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan government is morally desirable or politically shrewd. If the issue is the ability to negotiate a security treaty with guarantees, then good relations could ostensibly exist with a Sandinista-led regime—despite our dislike for their government.

Christian ignores the contradictions in the Reagan administration policy towards Nicaragua—its endorsement of the *contra*, as we

have seen, who could be depicted by the Sandinistas as mercenaries because they were used by the United States. As Christian herself puts it, it was unclear whether the administration sought to overthrow the Sandinistas or use the *contra* as a chip to stop arms supplies to Salvadoran guerrillas. Nevertheless, she argues that to meet the needs of Nicaraguan democrats, there must be "a more interventionist policy than the United States has been willing to commit itself to in recent history." On the other hand, Christian argues that a security guarantee *could* be worked out with the Sandinistas. The most ardent Stalinists like Tomás Borge might be willing to accept a trade-off—an end to arms shipments in return for a *modus vivendi* with the Sandinista regime—since then they would be free to move Nicaragua in the complete direction of a Cuban-Soviet model state. Paradoxically, however, the more moderate elements among the FSLN leadership—those from the pre-Revolution Tercerista faction—might be willing to open up things internally, but are less likely to want to cease all support to nearby Central American revolutionaries.

Christian eschews "black and white choices between national security and national conscience," and warns against accepting either a right-wing authoritarian regime that is hospitable to the United States, or a left-wing regime simply because it promises not to be interventionist. But if Nicaragua pledged not to aid other guerrilla armies, cut its ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union, then from a security standpoint, the United States could live with it—as it does with China and Yugoslavia. We might express distress that the Revolution ended with the defeat of true democrats with whose ideals we sympathize, but there would remain little justification for seeking to put military, economic and diplomatic pressure in order to isolate and overthrow the government. The fact is, as Christian is forced to admit, "the possibility always existed for a negotiated settlement of sorts between the United States and the FSLN . . . the Sandinistas appeared willing to satisfy U.S. national security concerns, including some kind of agreement terminating Sandinista support for the Salvadoran guerrillas." But she hints she is opposed to that kind of deal, since it would entail United States abandonment of the *contra* and consolidation of the Sandinista regime internally.

The question, then, is whether Nicaragua's increasingly Leninist structure alone gives the United States the right to intervene to put in power those we find more desirable. Christian would say it does. But then, if internal repression which we oppose is the criterion for intervention, then the United States would have a moral obliga-

tion to move with force against right-wing authoritarian regimes we currently support, such as Guatemala. By all accounts, that government in particular is in fact far more repressive in character and oblivious to human rights violations than is Nicaragua. Not only does the United States not interfere with that country's military, the Reagan administration shows no inclination to offer its support to the embattled few remaining democrats in their struggle against the Guatemalan military. Indeed, it is trying to use scheduled demonstration elections as an excuse to resume canceled military aid to the brutal *junta*.

What Christian ignores, as Robert Leiken has put it, is that the Reagan administration, in invoking freedom and democracy, "opposes the increasingly totalitarian Sandinistas with unconditional backing for a rebel leadership that is disrespectful of human rights and reminiscent of the detested Somoza dynasty that ruled Nicaragua before the revolution." Christian, on the other hand, believes it is not easy to "argue against the general principle of backing the *Contra*," since she sees their existence as the sole force that gives hope the Sandinistas could be pressured "into accepting major structural changes toward an open political system." But, as I said earlier, the effect of unqualified support to the *Contra* appears to be precisely the opposite; i.e., it provides the excuse needed by the hard-liners to consolidate their power fully, and to move more quickly to put into effect the Cuban-Soviet model. And that support of CIA-financed reactionaries allows willing liberal and left supporters in the West to "explain" that such measures are only temporary security steps taken in the face of United States aggression.

Let no one misconstrue my differences in assessment of policy questions to indicate that I have a negative view of Shirley Christian's contribution. On the contrary, it is the strength of her reporting and her insights that allows a reader to disagree with some of her political analysis and views, and to realize that such disagreement in no way detracts from the power and persuasion of her main arguments. In the final analysis, it is her exposure of the process of revolution and of the true politics of the Sandinistas that has so enraged the Western "official" left. Those who wish to understand the Nicaraguan revolution, regardless of political persuasion, owe it to themselves to undertake a careful and serious intellectual confrontation with the evidence and story told by Shirley Christian.

Melinda Camber Porter

AN INTERVIEW WITH OCTAVIO PAZ

MCP: You are one of the poets who manages to maintain a high level of cerebral awareness. You do not seem to be wary of writing criticism while writing poetry. Someone like Wordsworth says, you know, we murder to dissect with our mundane intellect. And particularly nowadays many poets and artists tend to take a very mistrustful stance towards a certain form of cerebral awareness. Why aren't you frightened or wary of being a critic?

OP: Well, I am more frightened of the obscure part of our mind we know as the personal part of the unconscious. I am afraid also of pure reason. I think that the great problem of our time and of our civilization has been the dissociation of reason and the unconscious self. As a matter of fact Wordsworth has some ideas, and very cerebral ideas, but he didn't want to discuss them. Coleridge wanted to discuss his ideas. But Coleridge was dull; his poetry was. Perhaps in his case (we don't know) the mind destroyed the poet, but I don't really believe what I just said. No, I believe great poetry in some ways can be united with good thinking. After all, the great moralist Dante was also a great thinker and a great poet. And in a more modest way in our century Eliot has done it, and some others, such as Verlaine. But I think reason has its limitations. As poets we must read that limit.

MCP: How?

OP: In my case I think it was a girlfriend interested in my poetry, who helped me see the limits of reason. As a matter of fact, it was very strange because I spent a large part of my life trying to prove the limits of pure reason. But the girlfriend helped me to realize that I used too much reason in my poetry.

MCP: In your book *Conjunctions and Disjunctions* (which I saw, more or less, as a synchronic and diachronic study of eroticism), you seemed to be saying that in recent times we have codified sexuality and the unconscious drives in an over-dogmatic way. As if our intellect has destroyed a workable concept of love.

OP: Yes, that's right. I suppose that in Western civilization, there was great repression of sexuality and eroticism, especially since the nineteenth century. Perhaps it has accelerated. Clearly, with the triumph of rationalism and the Catholic ethic, we experienced

a repression of sexuality. On the other hand, in the nineteenth century we have in poetry a liberation from the Puritanical mind, and an interest in sexuality. And that I see as a positive step. Now the problem is that I find there are three levels in this domain of eroticism. One is the animal, the biological. You find sex in plants, in fact, everywhere. It is the domain of life and stands for the preservation of life. Then you have the domain of eroticism. And you find eroticism in primitive tribes. Eroticism is specifically human. And it is different because primarily it is sexuality transformed. People make love but they make love with imagination and with ceremony, and in different styles. And then we have another level. It is a very curious invention: the idea that "I love you." Perhaps this concept of "love" began in Greece with homosexual love and Platonic love. The Greeks would say they "loved" a young boy. But it was as a way to contemplate absolute beauty. That was not really love in the modern sense, in the real sense. Love is possible when you are fixed on one person and this person responds to you. This is the mystery. You do not just contemplate the love object. For she is a person who can answer you, love you, destroy you, who can do evil to you, etcetera. She is no longer at a distance, as in Platonic life. You are intimate with her. And that was a discovery of the poets, not of the philosophers. The poets discovered it and then the novelists. This love is vast. And it is important to see the freedom of the love object, which is not an object. And we worry, because we don't know if she or he is going to answer us in the right way. This idea of love is with a very unique person, with a unique body. In eroticism you can replace the object, and you can change. You can have one thousand people making love at the same time in different positions. That's eroticism. But love is a kind of monstrosity, no? It is possible only with that one person. I think that we owe to this passion the best things of our civilization. The great novels, the great poetry, the great myths. In some ways love was seen as a kind of sickness, but a sickness without which you cannot live a real, good life.

MCP: Yes, but you're saying that it's basically an invention of poetry.

OP: Yes. I am.

MCP: And an invention that is invented by each nation.

OP: Yes.

MCP: It seems to me that the United States is particularly lacking in any tradition of eroticism. Eroticism is to be found in France, and

I'm not sure about England. But perhaps more so than in America, where sexuality is somehow cleansed in a rather strange way.

OP: The Americans are obsessed with the idea of nature.

MCP: Nature?

OP: They want to be natural. The Americans are obsessed with the idea of love being natural.

MCP: Why do you think that is?

OP: In the American tradition, eroticism is a sin. They're puritanical. Now in a rebellion against sin, the favorite thing is to turn to nature. It's very funny, all these manifestations of love. Sexual minorities confuse passions and political rights, political rights and natural rights. I think eroticism is not natural. It is the contrary of natural. This is one of the myths of the American civilization. Nature. To be natural. To be naive.

MCP: Coming from what, Thoreau?

OP: Yes, coming from Thoreau. But Thoreau is coming from Rousseau, no?

MCP: Yes.

OP: Of course, all civilizations are nostalgic for nature.

MCP: For some imaginary past when we were at one with the world?

OP: Yes, and that is very visible in Whitman and Thoreau. I love Thoreau, as a matter of fact, and Whitman. Whitman is a great poet, but even he has his faults. He has had a very bad influence on Latin American poets. Many of them have tried to imitate his grandiosity.

MCP: The influence of French literature has been very strong in your work.

OP: Yes. But in Mexico when I was very young I studied English poetry. I loved the Romantic poets: Shelley, Keats. Then I suddenly discovered modern poets, and I read Eliot, in the forties. And then many others. I knew Whitman. From Eliot I went back to John Donne and seventeenth-century poets. Essentially, French ideas on poetry were rather important, especially those of the surrealists. But my poetry was closer to the Americans. The idea, for instance, to make a long poem was not French; it was an American idea.

MCP: On the other hand, in *Eagle Sun*, I found similarities with Baudelaire's prose poems.

OP: Yes. *Eagle Sun* comes directly from French surrealism. I know I am very much interested in intellectual things, but when I write

poetry I seem to have faith in destiny or chance. I don't know how a poem is going to be begun and how it is going to end.

MCP: The freedom you allow yourself might account for the new forms you create. For example, *Monkey Grammarian*. I have never seen or read another book in that form.

OP: I am very flattered. I love the idea of creating a new form!

MCP: It was indefinable to me. And I wondered if you sometimes thought of the form first (like Gerald Manley Hopkins, who thought very precisely about what kind of rhythms and forms to give something in advance).

OP: Very difficult, very complicated. I have used both systems. For instance, I wrote a love poem called *Imperial Soul*. I wrote the first ten lines without knowing what I was writing. I knew more or less that I was writing something about loving. I didn't know which direction I was going. Then I had to interrupt when I could no longer write. Then I tried to follow the spirit of these ten lines, to consciously work on recreating those feelings that were given. And then I stopped. I had to make a trip. When I returned to Mexico after two weeks, I had written another fifty lines. Then I was upset about taxes, the office, and about every place I tried to write. The poem was a strange combination of something given and of something constructed. Little by little, it was finished in a kind of collaboration between the given and the constructed. It was very strange. The use of a rhythm probably helped me. In Spanish, I use a very classical meter without rhymes. Blank verse—of Wordsworth or Milton.

MCP: Or Eliot?

OP: Occasionally, in a very long poem, I calculate everything. Or I will know the form, but not the idea.

MCP: So it's as if you are *given* part of the poem and your work consists in constructing the totality.

OP: But it is very difficult if you write short poems. In poetry you must take everything away, leave only the essentials. You take out the connectives. Prose demands more conscious work.

MCP: You talk a lot about your relationship with words, as do most modern poets. I was wondering whether at times you might feel a sort of unity with language. If you like, an oceanic feeling that one also feels when in love? At any point in your relationship to words, do you feel that it's like a big sea to merge with and even be submerged in?

OP: It is. Sometimes you also feel that you are not only using the language but you are on the language, as on a wave, no?

MCP: Yes. And sometimes even that the words are more important. Often when I'm moving down the street I think I am just the words because I'm not very conscious of the way I'm moving or of what I'm feeling necessarily. But there are words going on in my head.

OP: Yes. Language has a life of its own.

MCP: Do you ever get frightened of the power of words?

OP: No. The fear is linked more to the process of interpreting the great silence. That is the great value of a poet. I think that almost all the poets have suffered from this fear of silence.

MCP: Have you ever suffered from any periods where you don't want to write?

OP: Yes. Many times. It's a kind of sterility. You cannot concentrate. Or you can concentrate but you try to write and you cannot. As a matter of fact, many times I have written to fight this sickness. I write to overcome this terror. I think this is one of the subjects I have written about most fully, this blocking of the language. The incapacity to talk. Or when the sea of language starts to be—a desert.

MCP: Have you ever wondered what might cause a blocking? Do you think it is a natural thing like the rotation of crops?

OP: Perhaps it is natural? It never feels natural. We feel it is a sickness, a kind of malediction. Then you do things. Or you drink. The better thing is to write.

MCP: Would you even consider writing a letter or a note in a diary? Just to keep writing?

OP: I think Pound said it, and it is very interesting, that during a period of sterility, a poet should translate a lot. Pound was a very prolific poet.

MCP: Do you like him?

OP: Well, yes. I was one of his admirers before he was well known.

MCP: Do you find that your relationship with contemporary writers is helpful to you?

OP: That's a very difficult question.

MCP: Do you maintain a correspondence with poets, do you enjoy going out to dinner with them, or do you prefer to read other poets?

OP: In Mexico? I don't want to answer your question, because it is very complex.

MCP: Going back then, do you write many letters?

OP: Yes, I write letters but not very interesting ones. When I was younger, I used to write many more letters.

MCP: Were you aware of them as a literary form?

OP: Yes, in the past. But now, no. And journals, well, I had many. But I have destroyed them. I don't want them. Again, life is one thing. And literature is another. No, I don't keep my journals. I think literature, poetry, is made of life and also transforms life. It is not the raw material of life. Confessional poetry doesn't work.

MCP: Poetry is not a confession. What springs to mind is that in the confessional one is admitting to one's weaknesses. There is some sense of judgment that's involved. I wonder what makes confessional writing? Is it because one is not in a sense talking to a loved person but perhaps to one's moralistic eye?

OP: We are talking in English, and English is not my language. It's rather strange because when you speak another language, a foreign language, you are not the same. It changes personality.

MCP: How would you say your English personality differs?

OP: I think I am better in English. More moderate. In Spanish, my own language, I am perhaps overconfident. In English I listen. And it also allows me to hesitate. I can see myself swimming in the language.

MCP: So if I were to speak to you in Spanish, you would make more definite or more impassioned statements?

OP: I don't really know. It would be different. Because the languages are different. You are working in a system that is not very well known to you, but you have remained there and you walk on and then you turn the corner and you find that instead of the building that you were expecting to see, you find another word to say.

MCP: When you see translations of your poetry, how do you feel?

OP: Sometimes I am pleased. Sometimes I am surprised, because they have expressed my poem in a different and perhaps better way. That's why it's better for a poet to translate a poet.

MCP: Do you have any magical devices to help you start writing? For instance, Ingmar Bergman won't go on the set unless he is wearing different colored socks.

OP: Yes. For me, poetry has to do with simplicity. And you can write it at any hour. During the night, in the morning. Sometimes you cannot write, but you hold on to the words, and the first morning you are free, you take a piece of paper and make notes. Poetry

is in some way continuous, because you are always thinking about writing a poem. Sometimes that part of your life has nothing to do with the state of your disposition. You can be very sad and write a kind of satirical or gay poem. Or you can be very happy and write something very black. It's very strange. Language has a life of its own: you write down one word and this word communicates with others and you follow and participate, but not in a very consciously active way.

MCP: I was also wondering, since you've lived in India and Mexico and Paris, whether particular locations inspire you to write?

OP: Once I lived in England, in Cambridge, and I loved it. England was a great discovery. I very much admired the English, and their political institutions. I thought that England was the perfection of political life. I believe the Latin countries could use the British kind of political institutions, and the life and poetry. You have the richest poetry of the Western world. I love reading the English poets. I love Milton. He had such a bad reputation, thanks to Eliot. But he's a great poet. He had a great imagination that fits the modern world so well. This hell that he describes is really very modern, very accurate.

MCP: Yes, and I think Blake is another person —

OP: Yes, we have not talked about Blake. He was my first great love. When I was in Cambridge I discovered Wordsworth. At first I found him a monotonous poet, but when I saw the English landscape, I found him a very great poet. The world is important to my work. For Mallarmé the world was not the world. It was the idea of the world. For him the real thing was the streets and the buildings and people. For me it's different. I don't think you can have good poetry without the sensuality of the world.

MCP: I think that for someone like Mallarmé, the world was himself and the blank page and a room.

OP: Yes, that restricted view is impossible for me. I don't even admire his position, though he was a great poet. My philosophy is the opposite, it is that of the poets who can give embodiment to the world: Blake, for instance. Or Wordsworth, when he talks about his childhood in the *Prelude*. He talks about ice skating in the woods, of young boys crying and laughing. It was beautiful.

MCP: Eliot says that after the metaphysical poets, there was a "dissociation of sensibility" and that the metaphysical poets absorbed things, new inventions, objects. Do you feel that this comes naturally to you, to absorb the modern world?

OP: I think it's part of me. Eliot was talking about his own dissociated sensibility.

MCP: He wasn't a very passionate man.

OP: No. He separated love, it seems, from living.

MCP: Terrible. Yes. I think he was also very cruel to women, and frightened of them.

OP: Yes. I've been wondering what he was like in his private life.

MCP: A friend of mine is writing a play about his relationship with his wife, and apparently he's gleaned the most terrible facts about Eliot. I won't go into them because they seem too sordid; they show a real sense of horror at femininity.

OP: I've been thinking about him recently. In his poetry women — they are not women anymore.

MCP: They're all dry, and the people are all dried out.

OP: And when there is sex it's rather sordid.

MCP: Because of his fear of women, he tried to make the women mad. In his mind he projected onto them all his fears, and he tried to lock up one of his wives. I think he succeeded, by sort of telling her that she was mad.

OP: Yes.

MCP: I think you said once that North American women feel extremely uncomfortable because their femininity is not given any place in the society.

OP: Yes. Absolutely. In Protestant countries you have a religion without a goddess and without saints. We have the Holy Mary. However, New York City is separate from the United States — and there the masculine values are not important. But feminists have adopted masculine values. I think it is an enormous mistake of the feminist movement not to retain the differences, but to aspire to identify with men. They have the idea that men and women are made different by society alone. But we are physically different.

MCP: I actually think there is a definite difference in sensibility, too. It is similar to the great differences between cultures, which I would like to see maintained.

OP: I am for differences, differences of cultures, differences of sex.

MCP: It seems to be a problem for a lot of people, though, to accept the notion that difference and similarity can exist at the same time.

OP: Yes, we confuse equality with identity. People think that if you are equal, you are identical. That is not true. We are equal and

we are different. I must respect you. I must respect your difference. That's very important, when discussing sex and love and cultures.

MCP: I think so. And I think that one of the most terrible problems one sees on every level of society is the built-in need for what I would characterize as a slave-master relationship. It seems that the world cannot get itself out of this pattern.

OP: Yes, but Western civilization did not create this slave-tyrant bond. The West invented anthropology. The Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese were scornful of other civilizations. But Westerners have preferred to try to find great qualities in other cultures. You know we shouldn't be so ashamed of Western civilization. Don't you think? I have been trying to defend it.

MCP: There has been a rather strong fascination with the Far East and with India recently in the West, and a turning from our own culture.

OP: Well, the West is hesitant, because we have done terrible things in the last hundred years.

MCP: But America escaped this sense of being responsible for the horrors of the two wars.

OP: The Americans have a beautiful sense, a great anthropological sense. But Americans have the problem of the barbarians, of becoming civilized. To be civilized is to be old. To have a land which is identified with the past. And they are newcomers to a new land. When the Germans arrived in America after the Second World War, they brought their history, but when the Puritans arrived in America, they were escaping history and arrived to no history, to before history, to a country without history. They were escaping European history and arrived in a country without history. The people who were there before them were nomadic people, the Indian tribes. And this has been the great problem of the United States, this wish to escape history. That's why I am truly fascinated with the United States. It is a society founded (and it still is) against history, outside history. The Puritans founded the United States in a religious way. Then the founding fathers tried to build a moral society which would escape the destiny of Western society, the monarchy, intolerance. They wanted to live outside history. But you cannot live outside history. That's why they have this ingenuity, this kind of great generosity—and at the same time a sort of incomprehension. I admire the Americans for having been able to solve, more or less, their domestic problems. I

mean, this is a society that internally works, much better than the others, much better than Latin America or Europe. Mexico is a disaster. And the Americans are trying to solve even the great problems, the racial problems. But they are unable to deal with foreign issues. Even a great President such as Roosevelt was ignorant in foreign affairs. And almost all the Americans are. They are different from the British, who always have that sense of universal history. That's why you've built a great empire, and the Americans could not. They have the power but they don't have the vocation to make a real workable commonwealth.

MCP: Yes. Every attempt has failed.

OP: The Russians, however, unlike the Americans, have an understanding of empire building and that is one of the great problems in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Russia is intrinsically a weak society, because it's a society which cannot change. It's the same since 1917 when the Bolsheviks took power. In fact, their foreign policy is not very different from the Czar's.

MCP: Are you saying that America is intrinsically a society that cannot extend its boundaries because of its incomprehension.

OP: Because of its foundations. Because they are a society that is trying to be outside history.

MCP: Nations seem to have different needs. I mean to expand, or to remain somehow isolated in order to deal with national problems. For example, China.

OP: The Americans expand but want to do it naturally. In the past century, the only conflict, the real conflict, was with Mexico and it was not real. There was a very silly war and they won it easily. And then they found that they were an empire and they used their power, but they did not do so intelligently. There's a basic contradiction between the founding principles of the United States and empire building. There's a very basic contradiction between democracy and imperialism.

MCP: What about Central America?

OP: In Central America the problem is very complicated because there are so many factions. You know Central America never was a country. It was part of the Spanish Empire. It was not part of Mexico, and these separate countries didn't exist until the nineteenth century; they were independent, but not because they had a national culture. The wars of independence of Latin America were taken as models of the war of independence in the United

States. This war of independence inspired a separation of the Spanish accord. That's what everybody forgets. Then the vacuum of power in Central America was filled by the Spanish, by generals, and by the intellectuals and the church. The intellectuals made the church, and then local politicians. And the fragmentation was fueled this time by American friends of politicians. A little later American business came in and then was used to exploit and ferment the resistance. The Americans were not the real cause of the disorder in Central America, but they used the disorder to establish the banana republics, and the United Fruit Company and all that. Now, what's happened? This particular economic setup disappeared. But Americans have helped set up some regimes that became unpopular in Latin America. Central America must be united from an economic point of view, from a political point of view, and from an international point of view. There are not many cultural differences between these countries. Except for Costa Rica, which in turn is very different from Panama, they are the same. To be a real country we must unite and yet retain each country's independence. This is a good idea, from an economic and political point of view. But at this moment of crisis some of the elites of Central America have become radical, Marxist-Leninist. And that is new. Yet the Sandinistas are Latin American, and this is part of Latin American reality. There are only realities, ideal ones and real ones. But the real Latinos of Latin and Central America always were the Mexicans—since the nineteenth century. But this has changed, because revolutionary movements now are linked to Soviet imperialism. This is a new fact and a new problem in Latin America, because a viable Central America needs a united society with a common goal, and with a modern democratic government. But that is impossible at the moment. I think Mexico should promote the idea of Central American unity and of democracy. To allow leftist governments in Central America would distract Mexico from such a path. That is not a very popular idea among intellectuals, either in Latin America, in Mexico, or in the United States. I know.

MCP: Most intellectuals in Mexico are pro-Marxist?

OP: Well, it is a great puzzlement. I think it has to do with moral and personal psychology rather than with history.

MCP: Do you think it derives from the power of words?

OP: Also from desperation, from many things. Intellectuals in the twentieth century have great problems. Of course, some of them

have been able to resist the fascination with totalitarian ideologies. For instance in the Soviet Union some poets—Mandelstam. Some in Nazi Germany also. But Western intellectuals have been rather free of repression. So they have loved dictators in a sort of frivolous way, don't you think?

MCP: There are some unpleasant examples of people like Ezra Pound—

OP: Ezra Pound was a great poet who was more or less Fascist. On the other side, Neruda was a Stalinist, as were Bertold Brecht and many others. Even intelligent people who were not Stalinists: Jean-Paul Sartre, who tried some kind of strange communism. He was full of hate for his own civilization and felt great love for the Third World. I mean, Utopian thinking took the form of self-hate. This is important. But Americans have more than political interests. Therefore, they cannot allow, as I understand it, Nicaragua to become a basis for active revolutions. I had a friend, a Greek friend, a former Marxist, who said Russians don't want war, they want victory. I think that only by the nonintervention of Russia, Cuba and America in Central America, could the Central Americans solve their problems. I should like to see this problem resolved, by a united and democratic confederation of Central American countries—without getting Leninism, Marxism or this kind of thing into Mexico and South America. I don't know if this is possible, but it should be the goal. There is another issue to which we cannot close our eyes. This fight is not only a geographical fight, it's a fight that's very important to a writer like me. Russian students have hope; and I think it is a shame that Western intellectuals were accomplices of Stalin in the twenties and thirties and forties without knowing that Stalin was killing writers. For me, this cooperation of the Western intellectuals with the Soviet Union presents one of the most important problems of our times.

MCP: Is your view unpopular in Central America?

OP: It's especially unpopular in Mexico. But I have never been popular and I have never looked for popularity.

POEMS

W. S. Merwin

SNOW

Comes the dust falling in the air
comes in the afternoon the sunbeam
comes through the sound of friends
comes the shadow through the door
comes the unturned page comes the name comes the footstep
comes to each wall the portrait
comes the white hair

comes with the flowers opening
comes as the hands touch and stay
comes with late fortune and late seed
comes with the whole of music
comes with the light on the mountain
comes at the hours of clouds
comes the white hair

comes the sudden widening of the river
comes as the birds disappear in the air
comes while we talk together
comes as we listen to each other
comes as we are lying together
comes while we sleep
comes the white hair

MORE

There must be more
is what the humans say
and each time it means something different

it is not the theory that matters
of the black tires spinning around the sun
and the meteors playing among them
notes of music that on earth
make things happen

they happen in the sun
these voices saying there must be more
and explaining
and in a while
all you will want to remember
will be the circumstances in which you heard
the explanations
there was on that day a famous
athletic contest
and meanwhile
the old friends the voice singing the city at night
the black tire running
on its street
nearby

the night when you
walked alone in the city where you had been born
and heard the tires
and saw the first imitation stone mask

and the white avenue
and forgot them

John Hollander

AN INTRODUCTION TO ABSENCE

"Absence," Fulke Greville says "is pain."
I flee it through the gates of sleep;
Discount therefore the tears I weep
A propos of the falling rain.

My sobbing, at the sunset hour,
Half-rhymes with distant pistol-shots
Re-echoing from chimney-pots
And the round, nearby water tower.

Lacrimae rerum, and their thin
Counterparts in my sorrow, cry
Not for my loss: that leaves a dry
And silent emptiness within,

A hall deserted even by
Pain, which is presence, after all,
Of dark, intruding waves which crawl
In at the hand or at the eye.

Absence is presence, then, we learn,
Joined by the middle term of pain.
You gone, only such jokes remain.
Et excrucior. And I burn.

A TALK IN THE PARK

“With thee conversing I forget
All time,” Eve said to him, and so
Would I to you: but time shall mow
The living grass where we are met

In the sparse park amid the hiss
Of crawling traffic, where your talk
Leads me for a brief space to walk
In bowers of artificial bliss.

Unchanging winds blow through the leaves
(Lips that can whisper but not kiss);
Yet time remembers us in this:
Our words are reaped and bound in sheaves

And gathered in and stored in dense,
Dark granaries for winter feasts;
Slow, kind, uncomprehending beasts
Will eat our words in innocence.

Alone I'll watch through hardened, iced
Winter sun, in that hay-day of
The fallen green of hope and love,
Shivering and unparadised.

Eugene Dubnov

BY CRAMOND SHORE

For R. Robertson

The Road

The road crosses wet ground,
Raised on a causeway,
Over buried ditches or pits,
Near the spread of grasses and heather,
And wild stones in the unfamiliar field,
Under unending rain,
Through the wet wind,
During the period of dormancy in seeds,
On a dark night when months and years are numbered.

The Tide

The tide begins at four,
and at six
the stones are covered with water
and the way to the shore is gone.

And he got up and went
knowing the rightness of the way
where the birds gather
in the wake of the wind

across the restless waves
breaking over the stones.

Coming to the Water

With the curse
curving the tongue
where the light depends on the wind
coming to the water
watching the light and listening to the wind
under the curse of the language.

Jill Bialosky

COLD HEART

The slow drift of clouds
neglects the face of the sun,
and the snow keeps coming.

The less than tame wind dismantles it,
brushes the black branches
of a particular oak to one side
like a girl throwing back her hair.
The ice engraved in the crevices
of bark is your idea of sensual.

You would find it more than beautiful,
this wilderness where a pine
is the only thing in sight, green, unstripped.
Only you'd be obsessed with the lesser,
barer trees, how immense you'd feel
next to them, how gracious you'd become,

and the starlings, how they regroup
from tree to tree in one thick flock,
how they leave not one alone.
Sometimes the wind gets so crazy

and goes on for so long,
as though confessing

to the air. You would stand still and listen,
note how the dry falling snow
dies into the rest of itself,
and for a minute your cold heart

would quiver. I wish you could see
each morning, the red-headed woodpecker
knocking against the bark,
how safe he is from all reasoning.

Paul Lake

THE AGE OF TERROR

No thunder across the steppes, no hoard of Huns—
The rat-tat-tat of automatic guns
Rattles our quiet. On a downtown street
Of any capital where four roads meet
A statesman lies sprawled out on the cross roads—
Or turns a key: his limousine explodes,
And footfalls echo down the corridor
Of history, where no ambassador
Or minicam can follow.

Blow your horn,
Roland or Gabriel, there's none to warn
Who hasn't seen already on t.v.
Some minister of ideology
Proclaim that as the sun sinks in the West
No Joshua can stall, no word arrest
The earth's sure revolutions at a command.
Instead, a darkness creeps across the land;
And since it's easier to turn toward night,
To bomb a powerplant, than to shed light,
The sun fails in the West. A new Dark Age

Is ushered in as nations hemorrhage
At every severed artery where bands
Of rag-tag soldiers issue their demands
At gunpoint. See, a new imperium
Broadcast by headline and by letter bomb
Replaces our old government of men . . .
Until, by fiat, light's declared again
At midnight, and an iron rule replaces
The old chaos with universal stasis.
O brave new world! more catholic than Rome—
The sky spreads like a cupola or dome
Over the earth—wide, wider—till the last
Protestant voice is silenced in the vast
Inhuman northern cold, across whose snows
The far-flung stars are archipelagoes.

László Baránszky

MY MIRROR IMAGE

This patched-up window is
my unsteady mirror;
I haven't seen myself
whole for a month now.

It's nothing but a punch hole,
mosaic of glass and newspapers
like: "our second army. . . ."
and "they shall be disembowelled
on the spot" and, of course,
card boards and running brown tape.

Something is always missing:
my left eye, now it's the right half of my upper lip,
this small triangle on my forehead,
my left temple.
I have two pennysized patches below
my right eye.

Smoke's rising in
my right eye and fills it.

**DIARY: DECEMBER, 1944;
JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1945.**

Being bombed by the Strategic Air Force, RAF, Luftwaffe, and by the Red Air Fleet, all in twentyfour hours while riding a bus to Budapest

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Heisenberg, Kant, Kierkegaard and the Russells, barricading the
window
and the rest,
Allgemeine Kunstgeschichte is the best fragmentcatching device,
thanks to the glossy paper.
All deaths are final, though unregistered.

Lawrence Raab

OTHERS

You will not appear in this story.
I won't find you strolling casually
in the little grove of ash and elm.
When the door opens, that will be my wife
returning from her shopping, my daughter
dancing in her new sneakers. Today
no ghosts will be allowed to arrive
wrap in their mild shimmers of light.

Nor you, who have so often entered
these stories, speaking
my lines, accepting my instructions
with that perfectly insubstantial
attention that becomes you
amid all of this ordinary life.

I walk out to get the mail,
drive to school, to the store.
I see a movie and returning home
glance up at the stars.
I sit down to write, and the stillness
begins to make me wish for you,

but I will give you nothing
to think of, not even the smallest
memory of a child
blurred and held high in his father's arms—

that imperfect light in which my father
holds and steadies me, and my mother
tells us to be still and look
in her direction, then pushes
the shutter, jarring the camera slightly,
a simple maneuver she would never master.

If you were here I would ask you
to turn and walk away, knowing
you'd have no choice and would believe me
if I told you I'd made all of this up
to pass the time, as it has,
regardless. And now

my house is so quiet
what I imagine most clearly
is my wife and daughter turning
in their sleep upstairs,
and now I believe I can hear
their breathing, so precise
and thoughtless,
so easy to mistake for my own.

James Galvin

WHAT WE SAID THE LIGHT SAID

Mystery moves in God-like ways
Is one of many possibilities
And may be why I'm here without you now,
Watching the sun go down.

High clouds bruise and white peaks incarnadine.
Slender tree of muliebrity would be another explanation.

Prairie grass, seductive, luxuriates in amber.
Some other
Scraps of clouds the rain left behind
Hunker down for the night in valleys.

The fencepost's shadow leaps out across the plain
Like the bejeezus
Out of someone.

The mirage becomes an oasis
Is something it might have said.
The first stars creep forward
Like wild children coaxed from the woods.

Love, then, was just a sweeter loneliness
Than this,

Though snowbroken aspen across the meadow
Still catch the latest light like a grove
Of saxaphones,
Like you said,

Temporary, like eternity,
Though once,
And once again,
Daylight held us on the tip of its tongue
And forgot what it was saying.

William Harmon

PROSE POEM

Use your imagination, your head,
oatmeal box, that comely cylinder, words
won't help although they want to,
rare earths, my dear, are neither rare nor earths,
as for this Jerusalem artichoke
in the inalienable shade of the tulip poplar,
well, all I can say is well, I love
the way they hold these truths, as
box holds oatmeal, molar amalgam,
the five great stanzas hold their heads high
in whatever it is history is, lifted

like five variegated pyramids
above the plain plane of ordinariness,
terza rima, ottava ditto, rime royal,
Spenserian, foursquare quatrain
like a mule, five different spoons in line
alongside one indifferent bowl
or one indifferent plate,
a cup of coffee AND a piece of pie,
the words of Arcady are dead
and gone that once
so vibrant and vivacious were.

James Mandrell

HANDS

I shroud my hands in mist

and pace the other
side of the street
at this distance
I don't know them
or what they do

* * *

At night asleep
an empty beach stretches
between a sea clear as blue
bottle glass and a wall of
chalk cliffs or passion-fruit trees
it doesn't matter

you're there
taking the sun at the end of the pier

I walk down the ribbon of sand
wearing my blue uniform
and soon arrive
my shadow falling across

you
we don't talk only
they
touch you I
stay dressed
it is a close view of
my hands against your darkness

* * *

This does not work

I am soon betrayed and
soon beside you
I cut my hands off to
step back
but never far enough
this is no dream
they do as they wish

* * *

tonight, names mean nothing

I lean back to sleep
but am restless
hearing names
I rise and move to
touch an ashtray filled two
days ago a book a lamp anything
far from the

winifred-jane-john-peter-lucy the
iron the coatrack I leave like the
slam of a door

* * *

The street comes up like a
slap as the stairs tumble
to the cement.

Everyday I pace
my hands up and down
the street. They'll
not come up with me,
I'll not have them back
to be nailed like his.

* * *

Already Tuesday and
already I still am not
tired the last dream
too thick for sleep

already my hands
reconciled, return to
their ways their search
for something to touch

not you

Joyce Carol Oates

SCAB

At first you bleed freely, like another's tears.
The taste is salty on the tongue.
The pain, though said to be centered in the brain,
throbs and blossoms in the wound,
imparts its radiance. . . .

By degrees the blood slows, as it must.
It thickens, congeals.
The wound shrinks to its proper size.
The scab is tender at first,
then hard, ridged—
a secret braille.
Your fingertips can't resist.

Later, the smooth surface of scar tissue,
mere striations in the flesh, invisible.
Much is forgotten.
Eventually, all.

Even death loses its appeal, with time.

Reginald Gibbons

WILDFLOWERS

Coleridge carefully wrote down a whole page
of them, all beginning with the letter b.
Guidebooks preserve our knowledge
of their hues and shapes, their breeding.
Many poems have made delicate word-chimes —
like wind-chimes not for wind but for the breath of man —
out of their lovely names.
At the edge of the prairie in a cabin
when thunder comes closer to thump the roof hard
a few of them — in a corner, brittle in a dry jar
where a woman's thoughtful hand left them to fade —
seem to blow with the announcing winds outside
as the rain begins to fall on all their supple kin
of all colors, under a sky of one color, or none.

Millicent Bell

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CAVE?

The most altering film version of a novel tells us something about its model by revealing those planes of cleavage to which the filmmaker has applied his hammer. In E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* David Lean found a crime thriller inside a drama of colonial racism. Its central scene is a trial for attempted rape in which the accused is an Indian, the supposed victim an Englishwoman—the master's fear being released into symbolic rage by the presumed threat to his woman's chastity. But Forster's plot has also an "entertainment" theatricality. It is a "mystery" whose solution suits the traditions of movie melodrama.

The potential of political theater is only weakly exploited in the film. The novel's pessimistic close (in which the earth and sky say "not now . . . not there" to friendship between Fielding and Aziz) is altered to sentimental reconciliation of the good Englishman and the Indian. In a film script prepared in 1981 by Santa Rama Rau (in the Manuscript Collection of the Mugar Library, Boston University), who seems to have worked with Lean before production began, the original ending is first retained, then, in a later draft, edited out to something resembling what now appears. Was Lean simply yielding to audience expectations of a happy ending? Or did he feel that the novel of 1924 was anachronistic? The English school principal and the Indian doctor would not find the same bar to their friendship today, perhaps, though racism is more with us than ever in a postcolonial world. But the leakage of political meaning from the story is not restricted to the film's last reel. Maybe the medium itself—which gives the viewer so little opportunity for reflection, for drawing apart from what is shown—tends to rob us of a sense of history. Film is always in the present tense. We are "taken out of ourselves" and become inhabitants of a world too immediate to be analyzed. And this immediacy is not diminished, it is even greater when the screen is a casement opening on a scene so exotic that it encloses us in its spell, separates us from the familiar. We simply gape with wonder from the moment we are plunged into the "colorful" bazaar at the opening to the stupendous view of the Himalayas at the end. For Westerners, characters and story become as picturesque as the now distant time and the always distant place. Consequently, though the

behavior of colonial India's rulers is not less deplorable than Forster made it, it lacks tragic vibration and the happy ending does not matter.

If the political seriousness of the book was somewhat inaccessible, there was a further seriousness which the film did not attempt to reach. Forster had insisted:

The book is . . . about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky, about the horror lurking in the Marabar Caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna. It is—or desires to be—philosophic and poetic.

But instead of searching for cosmic mystery, the movie exploits the “mystery story” and seems to suggest that what took place during the mixed racial picnic at the Marabar caves might be uncovered by a good detective. The right man even seems on hand. Fielding is fair-minded, intelligent, and no coward, and he is the friend of Aziz, the accused. Like the classic private eye or amateur righter of wrong he is, moreover, an outsider, critical of the prejudices of those around him, negligent of their observances. In the eyes of Turton, The Collector, or Aziz's chief, Major Callendar, or McBryde, the Police Superintendent, or of their wives, he is not “pukka.” He is a middle-aged—even possibly homosexual—bachelor. His opposite is Ronny Heaslop, the new Magistrate, a sahib on the way up, whom the plaintiff, Adela Quested, has come out to marry. But Fielding never takes up the detective role and is of no practical help to Aziz. He does not manage to confront Adela before the trial to persuade her to withdraw her accusation. He makes no attempt to find the missing witness, a guide who may have committed the crime. He does not try to get Aziz's only other white friend, Heaslop's mother, Mrs. Moore, to help, and she leaves before the trial opens. Yet the novel still provided Lean with a congenial way of unlocking the mystery. In a moment of thrilling surprise quite acceptable to film convention the trial is stopped just in time by Adela herself. On the witness stand she recalls climbing towards the cave with the attractive Aziz when she realized that she was about to marry without love. She knows she entered one of the caves alone and now remembers clearly also that Aziz did not follow her—and says so.

What then happened in the cave? In the film, Adela guesses

that she is like women who think they have received a proposal of marriage when none has been given — Freudianly, hysteric delusion has resulted from sexual repression. Lean adds substance to this view by inventing an early scene in which she wanders alone into a deserted Hindu temple. She sees erotic carvings, the expression of a culture in which sexuality is sacred rather than shameful, and is screamed at by a band of wild monkeys — and she flees directly to Heaslop and becomes engaged to him as though to protect herself from sexuality rather than to embrace it. A neat closure of the case with the help of psychoanalysis was not, however, Forster's intent. An early manuscript of the novel shows that rather than wanting to suggest Adela's hallucination, he thought of making it evident that she *had* been molested. In the end, he preferred to leave this ambiguous. He told a friend:

In the cave it is either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book. And even if I know! My writing mind therefore is a blur here — i.e. I will it to remain a blur, and to be uncertain, as I am of many facts in daily life. This isn't a philosophy of aesthetics. It's a particular trick I felt justified in trying because my theme was India. I wouldn't have attempted it in other countries which though they contain mysteries or muddles manage to draw rings round them. Without the trick I doubt whether I could have got the spiritual reverberations going.

The uncertainty that Forster placed at the very center of his novel might have been represented in a *Last Year in Marienbad* or *Blowup* but has no place in Lean's realism. The film maintains a little vagueness by concealing the moment when Adela flings herself from the cave, but shows her a moment earlier as she stands listening to Aziz calling outside, and makes it clear that he fails to find her. The novel keeps the episode obscure. There it represents, as obscurity does in the antirealist films just mentioned, a general uncertainty. Forster thought that India was itself a representation of this in the sense that it was a "muddle" without unitary meaning, a pullulating confusion of races and religions. Beyond India was a metaphysical indeterminacy represented by the doubt, the gap in the narrative.

But a more important "what happened in the cave?" is asked concerning the experiences of Mrs. Moore. In the film she is overcome merely by the crowd, the heat, the close air, and by a peculiar

echo that reverberates in the dark. The message offered by this echo in the novel does not readily go onto a soundtrack:

Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. "Boum" is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or "bou-oum"—utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "boum" . . . The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began to undermine her hold on life. Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur: "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same—"ou-boum."

Mrs. Moore's anti-vision, which tears the veil from appearances only to reveal a void, is the dark center of Forster's novel. It represents a crisis familiar to the modern mind. As in the writings of Beckett, nothing relates to anything else or can be distinguished from it, and language has no referents. But she is of an earlier modernism than Beckett; she is a nineteenth-century Christian, and her spiritual crisis is the common descent into despair undergone by many Victorians, an Everlasting Nay to Christian certainties that makes even the question of Aziz's guilt trivial: "When shall I be free from your fuss?" she complains to her son. "Was he in the cave and were you in the cave and on and on . . . and unto us a son is born, and unto us a child is given . . . and am I good and is he bad and are we saved? And ending everything the echo." Is an Everlasting Yea still attainable after this? The three-part structure of the novel—"Mosque," "Caves," "Temple"—may represent the Carlylean stages of belief, its loss, its recovery. The final section of the novel describes a Hindu festival celebrating the "release signified by the birth of Krishna" as the return of some measure of faith in universal connection and significance.

This "recovery" is not directly Mrs. Moore's, yet she is present when Fielding and Aziz meet again at the festival some years after her death. "God is not born yet—that will occur at midnight—but he has also been born centuries ago, nor can He ever be born, because He is the Lord of the Universe, who transcends human processes. He is, was not, is not, was." The mystery resembles the Christian incarnation, and an inscription beneath Krishna's image, "God si

love," is separated only by a misplaced letter from Mrs. Moore's own belief. Her influence restores understanding between Aziz and Fielding, though they cannot be friends. She is remembered by Professor Godbole who associates her with a wasp whom he finds it possible to love as part of the All (and the reader remembers how she had once looked affectionately at a wasp). She is present in her daughter, now Fielding's wife, and her son — who have their mother's "oriental" sensibility.

The festival itself pulses with a mixture of elements more ludicrous than splendid. "This approaching triumph of India was a muddle . . . a frustration of reason and form." The image of the God, "the size of a teaspoon," is surrounded by hopeless clutter and noise; the sacred mood expresses itself in childish games in which the worshippers smear each other with butter or greasy rice and play rude jokes. Godbole is hardly inspiring: "He was barefoot and in white, he wore a pale blue turban; his gold pince-nez had caught in a jasmine garland, and lay sideways down his nose." And he dances — "his little legs twinkling . . . noise, noise, the Europeanized band louder, incense on the altar, sweat, the blaze of lights, wind in the bananas, noise, thunder, eleven-fifty by his wrist-watch, seen as he threw up his hands." One can see why the filmmaker preferred to substitute a vague picturesqueness for such scenes. And Alec Guinness can do no more with Godbole than make him an old bore who had irritated Fielding earlier by mouthing transcendental platitudes when called upon to support Aziz:

"The action was performed by Dr. Aziz." He stopped and sucked in his thin cheeks. "It was performed by the guide." He stopped again. "It was performed by you." Now he had an air of daring and coyness. "It was performed by me." He looked shyly down the sleeve of his own coat. "And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good occurs."

The film is unable to suggest that the Hindu's "all is one," though presented with a certain irony by Forster, was an answer to indeterminacy.

Forster did not disapprove when Miss Rau omitted the last section of the novel in a 1960 play version. He said, "I tried to indicate the human predicament in a universe which is not, so far, comprehensible to our minds. This aspect of the novel is displayed in its

final chapters. It is obviously unsuitable for the stage, and Miss Rau — most rightly in my judgment — has not emphasized it, and has brought down her final curtain on the Trial Scene.” But he feared that his novel as a whole was undramatic. “There is a fundamental defect in the novel — the characters are not sufficiently interesting for the atmosphere. This tempts me to emphasize the atmosphere, and so to produce a meditation rather than a drama.” What is true of the stage — that it expresses everything through speech and action hardly assisted by “setting” — may be less true, of course, of film. The flowing images of the screen can provide some equivalence for what may be achieved by descriptive language. But though he includes the festival episode, Lean does not seem to have stretched his medium so far.

Probably film cannot fully exploit the tonal envelopment employed in *A Passage to India*. If visual correspondence links the shapes of mosque, temple and overarching sky, only language asks whether “beyond the sky must not there be something that overarches all skies, is more impartial even than they?” A meditative intelligence that belongs to one of the characters comments upon events continually. Only the makeshift of voice-over, eschewed by Lean, might represent Forster’s evocation of the region of the Marabar hills which “has been land before land began . . . flesh of the sun’s flesh,” an ancientness inhospitable to human impositions of meaning. But Lean does less than he might to produce subtleties of tone and mood through the collocation of the visible. A master of spectacles, he sells India like a travel agent. The bazaar seen at the start does not introduce us, as Forster’s opening description does, to the unglamorous *mediocrity* of the place where the story is to take place. The exquisite view of the Himalayas from the vale of Kashmir has no relevance to the jumble of sacred and profane at the Mau festival. As for the Marabar, Lean must have despaired as he searched for real hills that could communicate their effect in the novel. The caves that Forster had seen at Balabar would not do — they were ornamented with carvings and used as monastic cells whereas those in the novel were bare, uninhabited. Finally, Lean was pleased by some stony escarpments between Bangalore and Mysore. But they were without caves. So, one understands, he had holes dynamited into the rock with the confidence of the remaker of reality who has a budget of seventeen and a half million dollars. Yet the holes remained just holes in the rock.

And even the impression of character must suffer with this sacrifice of nondramatic language. As Professor Godbole becomes merely

tedious, so Peggy Ashcroft's Mrs. Moore is just an old dear who likes Aziz and believes in his innocence, and dislikes her pompous son. Disgusted and tired, she leaves. Forster's old lady, though becoming querulous and impatient, is someone who knows more than "the facts." The film viewer can only be amused when she becomes a mythic being, Esmis-Esmoor—a new deity in the Hindu pantheon—during the popular ecstasy over Aziz's victory. Yet she is both woman and sybil in the novel; she perceives the unutterable mystery; she persists supernaturally.

Forster's Aziz is a portrait of a man he loved, Syed Masood, to whom the novel is dedicated. Film audiences have tended to find him an unsatisfactory hero, obsequious when discovering that Fielding is friendly, then petulant and stupidly jealous when he thinks he has been betrayed; even the novel's readers disliked him, and Forster remarked, "Scarcely anyone has seen that I hoped Aziz would be charming." But we need to understand him in the context of history, taking account of the novel's double-time sense. It depicts India of before the First World War—the affectionate, hopeful Aziz belongs to that time. But it was mostly written afterwards when Ghandi had launched his noncooperation movement and Tagore renounced his knighthood after the 1919 Amritsar massacre—an event hinted at, anachronistically, several times in the book. The Aziz who at the end says, "Clear out, clear out I say. Why are we put to so much suffering?" belongs to the later period, the hidden historic context. A Muslim, moreover, he can no more than the Westerner share the Hindu confidence in cosmic unity.

Fielding and Adela also require a depth of historic focus not easily achieved in film. Only superficially opposed, both come out of the "fag end of Victorian liberalism" to which Forster said he belonged. Adela is as high-minded as anyone, intellectually curious and intellectually without prejudice. In the end she shows the English school virtues; she will not lie even to save herself from shame, and she does not whimper. On screen, the winsome prettiness of Judy Davis gives the lie to Aziz's contempt for Adela's physical charms, and when the prosecutor nastily asserts that the darker races are irresistibly attracted to the lighter, the sneer from another Indian—"Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?" falls flat. But the novel wants us to see her as a dry stick. Symbolically without passion or allure, her failure is the failure of a tradition. Fielding's sexual failure is like Adela's—he has failed in his previous love life and he fails Aziz, and his marriage to Stella does not yet reach emo-

tional consummation. His inefficacy, his failed detective-avenger function, is really the inefficacy of an exhausted ethicism, the goodwill of a class unready to make sacrifices.

Goodwill and good sense had been the creed of Forster's friends at Cambridge and Bloomsbury. "Only connect" is the famous plea of *Howard's End*. But by the time he took up the unfinished manuscript of *A Passage to India* this seemed inadequate to the problems of India. He told Masood, "When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go. My sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not. Not interested as an artist; of course, the journalistic side of me still gets roused over these questions." Perhaps only the Hindus, he may have thought, "connect" by means of an insight itself ambiguous—that the universe which is one is the negation of all meaning or the all-meaning of Brahma, God without attributes.

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Edmund Leites

THE FAMILY AS HISTORY

One of the signal features of modern culture, from the Edwardians to the present day, has been its powerful challenge to the traditional patriarchal family. From the perspective of modernity, patriarchal culture victimizes wives and children, assigning roles to them which do not fully acknowledge their humanity. But there are many recent historians whose work implicitly denies that modern forms of marriage, child rearing, and family life represent any kind of moral advance over previous centuries. Their effort to draw a different picture is based to some extent on a different reading of the past, but it is also rooted in their antagonism towards later, "permissive" attitudes towards marriage and the family. Their viewpoint reflects the rejection in the 1970s and 1980s of the liberation philosophies of the late sixties and early seventies, which supported emotional openness and antihierarchical institutions. But instead of praising the forties and fifties, as some neoconservatives do, the revisionist social historians have turned to the fifteenth and sixteenth or to the nineteenth century to take what is essentially a stand against the culture of the late sixties. Reading their books with this perspective in mind, we can see them as striking documents of contemporary sensibility and moral attitude.

The revisionists show very little awareness of their own ideological position. As they see it, their quarrel is not with modernity but with certain standard works on the history of the family and on sexuality. These include the late Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood*, which described the development of the idea of childhood from the late medieval period to the modern period in the West; Lawrence Stone's *Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, which covered the subject from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; and Steven Marcus's *The Other Victorians*, an exploration of nineteenth-century English sexuality. Each of these books had its own unique message. Stone and Ariès did not, for example, agree upon just how harshly children were treated in the late medieval and early modern period (Ariès thinks they were much better treated than does Stone). But to their opponents, all of the books do carry a common message: that humane, warm, caring and affectionate relations between husband and wife and between parents and children is, as a general phenomenon

in Western culture, relatively recent, having its origins in the culture of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and undergoing some reversal because of the prudery, hypocrisy, emotional and sexual severity of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. And if humane and caring relations within the family, along with the attempt to fuse together in the marriage relation both sensual and ethical components, are modern phenomena, then we, as moderns, occupy a privileged and morally advanced position in the history of private life.

The common moral sentiments of the revisionist historians should not blind us to their differences. Above all, they divide on the bearing of patriarchy's public conceptions of women, of children, and of sexuality on the actual practice, moral health, and happiness of private lives. The liberation philosophies generally took the position that there could not be a humane private life in a world where public conceptions of that life were inhumane. Modernity, in general, objects to the treatment of women in the imaginative and conceptual life of patriarchy's public realm, in its journalism, fiction, films, and popular science, just as much as it objects to the treatment of actual women, in daily practice, in both the private and public spaces of societies ruled by "the fathers." The reason may be the conviction that private conduct must necessarily, or generally, reflect public ideas. Or it may be the belief that even if we live rightly in private, we are much the poorer for having no public support and celebration, no public resonance, for our private ways.

One of the revisionists (Ozment) shares these ideas, but puts them to the defense of patriarchy. Another (Rose) goes far in the opposite direction, espousing a postmodern fictionalism. Many of the central figures of modernity, for example, Freud, thought that a happiness founded on illusion was not worthy of our respect. We achieve a greater dignity in enduring the pain of the truth. But without regret, some of the revisionists affirm the primacy of fiction over fact in the ordering of our private lives. What spouses believe about their marriage and lovers about their romance is more important than what is "really" going on, as determined by some objective, and public, standard. This amounts to saying that for strong-minded people, at least, the public realm is less of a danger than modernity would have it be. What is real in intimate relations is largely a fiction, best constructed, and enjoyed in private.

The most well known of the new revisionists is Peter Gay, whose *Education of the Senses* (Oxford University Press, 1984; the first in a projected series of volumes entitled *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to*

Freud) vehemently attacks popular and scholarly views of nineteenth-century bourgeois sexuality. Rebellious Edwardians and their successors, such as Steven Marcus, saw Victorian culture as having “a prudish and hypocritical surface” and an “illicit, often perverse underground, the two forever split apart.” Gay regards this as a cliché, inconsistent with the characteristic ambitions and experience of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Gay denies that the split between sexuality and emotions of commitment and love, so well described by Freud in his 1912 essay “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Spheres of Love” (and which Freud himself believed was the most common erotic disease of modern civilization), is a central feature of nineteenth-century bourgeois sexuality. “Freud was inclined to underestimate the opportunities for erotic happiness” — that is, for the fusion of care, affection and sexual excitement — “available in the bourgeois world, for men and women alike.” Extensive reading of diaries, letters, and memoirs, Gay claims, demonstrates that the nineteenth-century bourgeois typically, and often successfully, sought a fusion of eros, conscience, love and steadfastness within marriage.

Gay grants that the public attitudes of bourgeois culture expressed a deep ambivalence about sexuality and its expression. Marcus may have been overstating in saying that Dr. Acton’s belief that women were naturally sexually anaesthetic “represented the official view of sexuality held by Victorian society,” but it was a position that was widely if not universally upheld by writers on female sexuality. The pornography of mid and late nineteenth-century England, also a public treatment of sex, was equally inhumane. It assigned both men and women gargantuan sexual appetites, but cut these desires off from their more elevated feelings of love, caring, and devotion, as pornography typically does.

But “whatever they might claim,” Gay says, the sexual purists were not “authorized spokesmen for the middle class opinion of their time.” Nor did the pornographers and patrons of prostitutes speak for the characteristic bourgeois attitude toward love and sexuality. In between the expurgators and the pornographers, there remained what Gay calls “the most characteristic bourgeois perspective, an uncertain, far from consistent liberalism,” which sought to find a reasonable compromise between sexual license and the brutal repression of normal and healthy sexual needs.

Gay’s problem is to prove that the middle position did, in fact, represent the heart of the bourgeois viewpoint. The key element of

Gay's defense is not a demonstration, as we might have expected, of the public treatment of sexuality by the bourgeoisie. Instead, his argument rests upon what has often been taken as the outstanding mark of bourgeois repression: its hypocrisy and prudery in sexual matters. He takes this as evidence of the culture's intense desire to create and maintain a secure *private* realm for sexuality, so that it could be freed from the scrutiny of public judgment. The unwillingness of parents to talk openly about sex served the same purpose, although this left young adults unprepared for the erotic side of married life. Even the family was too public an arena; talk about sex had to be reserved for the intimate life of the couple alone. Bourgeois evasiveness, cant, prudishness, and hypocrisy were not forms of repression, but expressions of wise restraint in the service of eros.

The life of Mabel Loomis Todd illustrates Gay's thesis. A member of the elite of Amherst, Massachusetts, according to her diary, she led for years a highly active sexual life with her lover, Austin Dickinson, the brother of Emily. This liaison with Dickinson, treasurer of Amherst College and a pillar of Amherst society, was well known to the genteel society of the town, yet their peers did not ostracize either of them for this violation of the social code. In fact, she was lionized both during her affair and after her lover's death. Everybody knew, yet it was central to her social position for her husband, her lover, and for herself to preserve appearances. They were willing to keep their irregular sexuality private, though not altogether secret, which allowed society to accept her.

Such an account of the meaning of Victorian prudishness expresses Gay's own serious misgivings about the morality of the modern period. Gay thinks that humane sexuality can flourish in private without a corresponding public exaltation of its virtues. In fact, he believes more is lost than is gained by the demand that the public imagination openly celebrate sexuality. Contemporary culture does not adequately recognize the crudely pornographic and crudely moral elements in itself and therefore does not seek adequate defenses against them. As far as Gay is concerned, sexuality had a better chance within the constraints of Victorian life than it did within the "let-it-all-hang-out" modernity of Weimar Germany or the counterculture of the late sixties and seventies.

Gay's suspicions about counterculture sexuality may be right, but his defense of the Victorian bourgeoisie is flawed. If it created the public monster against which it had to defend itself by prudery, cant, and evasiveness, then the conventional view of the nineteenth-

century bourgeoisie as repressive is still correct. Earlier phases of modern Western culture were far less hostile toward sexuality. The religious reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in general steadfast in their exaltation of marital fidelity and the joys of conjugal love. The Puritans, for example, were no prudes when it came to discussion of sexual matters, and their discussion in the seventeenth century of the problems and joys of domestic life are considerably more at ease and happier with the carnal side of marriage than the treatments of the same topic by nineteenth-century dissenters. Why did the public treatment of sex become so oppressive in the nineteenth century? Gay suggests that the rapidity of change in the nineteenth century had something to do with anxiety in sexual matters, but just how the expansion of railway and telegraph lines encouraged pornography or the belief that good women were sexually anaesthetic is not spelled out.

One wonders to what extent humane private sexuality can flourish in a culture which offers little in the way of publicly shared elaborations of its blessings, the difficulties to be faced in its attainment, and the possible means by which a more civilized sexuality may be achieved. Is the fusion of sexuality and affection so natural to humane beings that they do not need the aid of their culture in respect to both its imaginative products and its scientific or common sense reflection? Gay builds his case for the humane happiness of much Victorian private sexuality on very little evidence, and there is plenty of evidence (some of which he supplies himself) to show that public silence was a cause of private unhappiness. This is not to say that the call for the public exaltation of eros, as expressed, for example, in the student movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, has served humane sexuality any better. The counterculture's public celebration of sexuality typically has an ulterior motive—the weakening of hierarchies and authority—and is not really in the service of eros, affection, and ethical concern. But it is surely reasonable to think that if there is to be a widespread union of these elements in the private lives of men and women, the public imagination must mightily come to its aid. This Victorian culture surely did not do.

Phyllis Rose's *Parallel Lives* (Knopf 1983), which describes the marriages of five Victorian writers, is another revisionist account of nineteenth-century private life, and one which argues that marriage at best is the union of two compatible fictions. In unhappy marriages, wife and husband hold to different versions of what is going on. In good marriages, Rose argues, there is a single narrative con-

struct. That the viewpoint is shared is more important to the couple's happiness than its truth. Rose offers the good marriage of the Mills as a case in point. John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor were not equals, he was the more intelligent and she was the more powerful, but "the facts in the Mills' case — that a woman of sharp and uncomplicated will dominated a guilt-ridden man — were less important than their shared imaginative view of the facts, that their marriage fitted their shared ideal of a marriage of equals."

Like Gay, Rose rejects the common view of Victorian life as heavily repressed in its intimate dimension but, unlike Gay, she sees herself as a spokeswoman for a "post-liberated age," which means in particular that she discounts the importance of sexual satisfaction to a happy and successful union. The shared fiction is what counts. Sexless marriages may reveal flexibility rather than abnormality. Harriet Taylor had no sex with her lover while her husband was alive, nor did she have sex with her husband after she began her relation with Mill; this period of abstinence lasted for twenty years and did not prevent what seem to have been good relationships with both men. And Rose praises the so-called Boston marriage, a lifelong commitment of two women who live together, whether or not any sex is involved. There must be other kinds of marriage, she writes, other long-term associations between two people beyond the very narrow ones husbands and wives generally demand of one another today.

Rose rightly accents the need for imaginative satisfaction between men and women, but the retreat to happiness in fictions is unappealing. Mill's own conviction, like Freud's later on, was that we achieve human dignity by living in truth, however painful, even though much of his own happiness with Harriet Taylor depended upon his living in a dream. And Rose surely underestimates the degree to which even the fictions we believe are constrained by actualities. The difficulties marriages encounter are sometimes caused not by disagreement about what is going on but by the intrusion of a painful reality which prevents husband or wife from believing the old scenario. This is strikingly illustrated by the Carlyles' marriage. Jane Carlyle took care of Thomas Carlyle, and he was grateful. "She sacrificed; he thanked her. That was the equilibrium of their marriage," says Phyllis Rose. It broke down, Rose thinks, when Jane wanted to change the scenario which they had agreed upon in the early days of their marriage. She had given up her life, given up her ambitions to develop herself in favor of serving him, and now she

wanted more in return than she originally had asked for (and he originally had agreed to give). "He was not grateful enough. She felt herself slighted and somebody else favored."

This explanation of Jane's change in feeling is not plausible, even on the basis of Rose's own description of the course of the Carlyles' life. Jane was a bright and ambitious woman who was determined not to sacrifice her independence, talents or freedom to the wifely role. Carlyle's courtship was long and hard, and she finally denied her ambitions in the expectation (accurate, as it happens) that he, with her support, would someday become a great man. She made a typical female investment in a male future, and she predicted that the result of this wager would be ample reward for her self-annihilation. When the rewards came, they turned out to be insufficient; she did not gain the full happiness she had expected. This is not a matter of mates differing in their interpretation of marriage and its rules. Jane was disappointed by a reality which did not conform to her expectations; the same thing happened, in fact, to Thomas as well. Rose exaggerates the power of shared private fictions to resist reality, and what is worse, she exaggerates their value.

The importance of public fictions for private lives is recognized in Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Harvard University Press, 1982), which challenges the view that Victorian patriarchalism marked a high point in the repression of women. Auerbach believes that whatever the constraints Victorian social and legal forms placed upon women, they gained great freedom by their participation in a Victorian mythic world. In this realm of the imagination, which Auerbach has discerned by perceiving a Gestalt in the disassociated "fragments" of myths found in popular articles, in high culture, and in pictorial materials, "a disobedient woman in her many guises"—as rebel against the family, the state, and God—is crowned 'as heir of the ages and demonic saviour of the race.'" The myth of the saving woman, she implies, was a potent counterforce against those forces pushing her toward subjection. In the image of woman as victim and queen, domestic angel and demonic outcast, old maid and fallen woman, what appear to be restrictive social categories are infused with the energy of the uncanny, giving these particular classes of women the power to create and transform their own character and selfhood (and ultimately that of others as well). Women were given a form of divine power formerly reserved only for supernatural beings, the power to transfigure all humanity.

A central challenge to Auerbach's thesis, and one which she herself recognizes, is the Victorian idea of the angel in the home, the woman as wife and mother on a pedestal but deprived of any real social power, imprisoned within her own virtue and her own domestic and highly private context. Both in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, this vision has been under persistent attack by feminists who feel that when women become so virtuous and angelic that they are deprived of sexuality and other normal human feelings, they are denied their full humanity.

Auerbach grants that exclusion from their human birthrights was a social insult to women, but she also argues that, imaginatively, this exclusion promised women the freedom of heaven. As angels, they were potent in the larger cosmos, in the larger divine and demonic realm which not only included humanity but all the beasts and beings of earth and heaven. Society may have been relentlessly patriarchal, but "literary iconography gave womanhood virtually exclusive access to spiritual depth and height." Woman is the link to both the lighter and darker forces, all the supernatural forces beyond the ordinary and everyday human. Victorian fantasy art, Auerbach asserts, found constant wonder in the juxtaposition of women with outlandish creatures; the *Alice* books of Lewis Carroll are only the most famous examples. Victorian iconography abounded in less canonical alliances between women and fairies, goblins, mermaids, vampires, and other creations and mutations. Auerbach argues that this derives from the angelic character of women; as angels, they bear resemblance to their demonic counterparts. The apparently quiet figure of the domestic angel, the angel in the house, is therefore an implicit revolt against the patriarchal iconography of official Christianity, in which angels had been generally pictured as male. In this reading of nineteenth-century iconography, women as victims, as old maids, and as fallen women also come in for new and positive readings. Their situation in daily life may have been severely constrained, but they experienced themselves and were experienced by others as bearers of grand and life-affirming power. As far as Auerbach is concerned, historians attribute too much importance to the boundaries created by social categories and not enough to the imaginative world by which these categories are interpreted. Unlike Gay and Rose, she understands that even in the interpretation of what is highly private, men and women often depend upon an imaginative world shared and sustained by a broad public.

A like understanding is unfortunately altogether absent in Linda

Pollock's *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1983). Pollock argues that there has been no important change in the devotion, care, and emotional style with which English parents treated their children in these four centuries. Her main opponent is Ariès. She objects to his view that the late Middle Ages did not recognize childhood, or, as he sometimes put it, that childhood did not exist in the Middle Ages. He meant by this that there was not a well-developed recognition of a world made especially for children; they were not insulated from the adult world nor kept from the special knowledge possessed by grownups. There was no idea of childhood insofar as childhood, as we moderns think of it, involves the creation by adults of a special and protected realm for children. Pollock misunderstands this thesis. She takes Ariès to say that adults in the Middle Ages simply had no idea that children were different from them in any way; that they did not see that people of six or seven or eight years old were in any way different from adults of twenty or thirty. It would be very surprising indeed, as Ariès himself recognized and as Pollock well knows, if people everywhere did not recognize significant differences between small children and grown parents. One might then wonder why Pollock offers such a simple-minded reading of Ariès, who made himself very clear on this point.

In Pollock's view, historians of childhood like Ariès have invented change in treatment of children for the sake of having a history of childhood. The scientific method, as she sees it, sustains a "no-history" theory of the family. The concepts of childhood and adolescence may not be quite the same, but parental care appears — from her statistics — to have altered little from the sixteenth century to the present. After reading 496 British and American diaries and autobiographies and an additional twenty-seven unpublished British manuscripts, she counted up each and every passage in which something about children occurs, and then checked to see whether there have been any changes — say, more instances of cruelty to children recorded in one era than in the next. On this basis Pollock concludes that parents are no more humane to their children nowadays than they were in the sixteenth century (no more beatings or abuse having been recorded then than were recorded later on). And in some cases, she says, the severity of nineteenth-century parents exceeded that of earlier centuries.

Pollock is willing to admit that public institutions do develop, but she feels that the relations between parents and children are

more or less biologically determined. Parents have to take care of their children for the advancement of their own genetic heritage. Thus, she adopts a sociobiological position to defend what is essentially an ahistorical view of the history of the family. This may seem a curious position to be taken by an historian, but it becomes more understandable when juxtaposed to the viewpoint of Gay, Rose, and Auerbach: that modern culture can make no special claim to humanity in the sphere of personal relations.

What is also significant about Pollock's book, for historians and general readers of history alike, is her objection to Ariès's method: an imaginative reconstruction of the cultural elements of a particular period, in which paintings, diaries, novels, court records, and a variety of other sources are woven together to create a sense of the mind of the people of an era. Pollock complains that sources used by Ariès are overwhelmingly secondary: moral and medical tracts, religious sermons, the views of contemporary experts, legislation, painting. They cannot be relied upon to tell us what goes on in the actual and mostly private relations of parents and children, since they express the norms and ideals of public culture.

She therefore objects to the use of child advice literature to discover how children lived in earlier centuries. She argues that contemporary British and American parents do not ordinarily heed the advice they read and that earlier generations were no different. If we want to know what parents and children actually *did*, rather than what experts or theologians said parents or children *should* do, we must rely on what Pollock considers more primary sources, namely, diaries, memoirs and letters which record the actual behavior of parents to children and children to parents.

We all know that there can be a gap between what people are told or advised to do and what they, in fact, do. On the other hand, it's hardly true that the world of childhood or of relations between parents and children is exhausted by bits and pieces of actual behavior. Parents and children inhabit larger cultural worlds composed of books, paintings, popular manuals, popular tales, all the sorts of material which Ariès uses, and these elements enable parents and children to give significance to the ongoing events of their daily lives. Thus, even if parents do not always follow advice, such advice is nonetheless an important element in attempting to understand the world from which they must draw significant attitudes.

Pollock objects to Ariès's method because it involves a "selective use of material," which permits him to use only that evidence which

supports his thesis. She calls his approach “anecdotal” and unscientific. This accusation could be levelled at any historian who relies on his good judgment to form a picture of a culture. What she offers in place of Ariès’s reliance on judgment is pure positivism. Pollock does everything she can to avoid the bias which she thinks historians often bring to an interpretation of their materials. Thus she prefers to adopt a method as mechanical as possible. The no-history thesis of Pollock’s book, for all of its charts and counting up of passages, remains unconvincing, however, precisely because her steadfast refusal to rely on her judgment as a historian prevents her from forming a Gestalt of the public world of symbols in which parents and children must live.

Actually, the method which Ariès uses is not at all arbitrary, though it does depend upon good sense and imagination and is, of course, vulnerable to individual bias. The method depends on being well-informed about the details of the past and on intuition about how these particular details fall into place. The evidence that Ariès provides is not meant to be geometric proof of the truth of his thesis. To practice history in this way, imagination is required—not in order to create a fiction but to get closer to reality.

I have saved the most vigorous defense of patriarchy against its modern critics for last: Steven Ozment’s *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Harvard University Press, 1983). Ozment thinks that the sixteenth and seventeenth-century family was, both in norm and in general practice, a humane institution and, moreover, that it taught humanity to its members. Its private life had a public purpose. “The habits and character developed within the family became the virtues that shaped entire lands.” The first and best place to learn to be part of a community (which requires that one must sometimes give up the pursuit of one’s own individual wants) was the family itself. A father must not only provide for the present and future needs of his own immediate family, but provide the “fatherland” with the moral adults it needs. The family was an institution for the creation of conscience. Unlike the modern family which Ozment thinks promotes self-centered individualism, home in this earlier time was “no introspective, private sphere, unmindful of society.” Ozment thinks that because it is infected by the very individualism that afflicts the modern family, modern historical writing has grossly undervalued the patriarchal world.

Ozment’s moral justification of the patriarchal family is sustained by his belief that the self-sacrifice required of its members in

no way prevents their achieving happiness. The fact that children had more duties toward their parents and society than they had rights did not mean that love and affection were absent from familial relationships. Nor does Ozment think that subordination of women to their husbands necessarily made them unhappy. It is true that women were denied power in the public world—what Ozment calls the “external social and political issues.” But he argues, as have many before him, that within the more private role of the housewife, women had power and were treated well by their husbands. They were not to be treated as servants or as slaves or as children. Domestic discipline finally depended on the man of the house, but men were to exercise this power with kindness and understanding. According to Ozment, there was no good reason why women should have found the subservient position in itself degrading. It was not a bondage that stifled self-realization. The wife was not considered a simple servant but a partner in the running of the household.

The curious feature of Ozment’s defense of the Reformation family is how much it reads like the defense which the Reformation authors *themselves* put forward; Ozment the historian doubles as Ozment the Reformation spokesman for the patriarchal family. He thus does not (and cannot) adequately address objections which have been fully developed only by modern “individualist” culture. It is one thing to portray the defense of patriarchy in the sixteenth century; it is another thing to think this would be philosophically sufficient as a twentieth-century defense of male superiority. Ozment writes as if the arguments of modern feminism did not need to be seriously met. His answers to the fundamental objection of modernity to the patriarchal family—that its allocation of duties and debts, rights and privileges, is unjust and irrational—are sometimes evasive, and worse. At one point, he defends patriarchy against its modern opponents by saying that judging “the past by egalitarian standards that have yet to find a clear consensus even in the modern world is to sow disappointment wherever the historian turns.” But with what else but our own well-considered values should we judge the past, the present, or the future? Someone else’s values, or those of some other time? Perhaps Ozment is suggesting that we should not judge at all. If so, then what of his own sympathetic account of patriarchy? Does he think *he* is not judging? And it is surely wrong to think that because a modern idea of justice has not gained everyone’s assent, we should refrain from using it to judge the past, when the idea was even less popular. On this account, our moral objections to the use

of torture in the Renaissance would have to be withdrawn, since even today it is widely used and thought by many to be at times legitimate.

Ozment's attempts at philosophizing about our moral judgments of the past are surprisingly weak. Perhaps he himself does not take these musings very seriously. What Ozment is really sure about is that people—men, women, and children—led happy, productive, caring, and affectionate lives under patriarchy, which were superior, all in all, to “modern” lives because *their* private lives had a public point. Ozment is not troubled that families are private, that is, that families keep their lives to some degree from public view, but he does object to their having a primarily private purpose, the pleasure and happiness of those who belong to them. The belief in the naturally public function of the family was already well-developed in the Classical Greek and Roman world and was a staple of Renaissance and Reformation social theory. It is true that modern individualism has distinctly weakened this conception of the family, and Ozment's misgivings are understandable.

The contemporary, and public, interest in the sexual happiness of marriages is an expression of this individualism, as is contemporary historians' concern over the happiness or misery provided by the intimate side of marriage in past eras. Rose's espousal of the need for private fictions and Gay's belief that privacy was a defense against the public order illustrate the current belief that families and marriages must protect themselves from the larger community—but this belief may give way to the even more individualistic conviction that the public world, in particular the state, should serve the family and the married couple, rather than the other way around. Of course, individualism need not altogether reject the idea that family and privacy have a public function, as John Stuart Mill's well-known argument for the social benefits of privacy illustrates. Nor must the older belief in the primarily public function of the family exclude the conviction that the family provides private benefits to its members. Ozment therefore objects to a defender of modernity like Lawrence Stone, who sees the affectionate family as an institution which only attained cultural dominance within the rise of eighteenth-century individualism. My own research in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Puritanism leads me to agree with Ozment's contention that the call for affection between husband and wife is by no means intrinsic to individualism. It is alive in the Christian humanism of Erasmus, Colet, and More, and seventeenth-century Puritans took the affec-

tionate side of their conjugal duties most seriously. I am less sure that Ozment is right with respect to the affectionate treatment of children. The demand for the maintenance of a cool and superior distance from one's children is quite developed in Puritanism. Fear was encouraged. Stone is on much more secure ground here.

But whatever datings are right, Ozment still confuses the affectionate and caring family with the family that is justly ordered. Masters may behave in a steady and kindly way to their slaves, and employers can be equally affectionate to their employees — no matter how unjust the relation between the two groups is. Subordinates can also show great love and warmth toward those who rule them. The existence of affection says nothing about the moral correctness of a division of rights and duties or about the allocation of superior and inferior positions, as feminists have repeatedly pointed out.

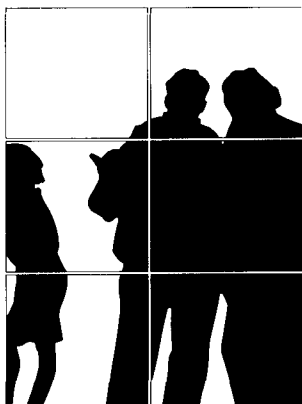
Ozment's more interesting error, however, is his belief that the Reformation family is justly ordered because its private life has a public purpose. The irrational allocation of power to fathers does not really bother him because the fulfillment of their responsibilities helps the family successfully serve communal needs. Children are raised as they should be, and so become adults with a developed conscience. In the contemporary United States, with a young professional generation so oriented toward its own happiness and so lacking in social concern, one can easily sympathize with Ozment's preference for a family life which would produce a different sort of adult, but patriarchy is still unjust, even if the families in which fathers ruled had a predominantly public purpose. It is worth noting, however, that modernity has not been able to successfully promote, on the level of the public imagination, an idea of family and married life which is egalitarian and just in its internal structure and at the same time devoted to the communal good.

The revisionism with respect to the humanity of family, marriage, and the general conceptions of men and women undertaken by historians of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century is by no means uniform, but a distinctly conservative trend is clearly at work. Beyond the historian's natural interest in challenging received beliefs about the past, there is an unwillingness to see modernity as morally advanced over earlier phases of Western culture. For Auerbach, the public myths of Victorian life nourished women more than we have known. For Gay, the private life of Victorians, carefully kept from the scrutiny of public culture, was richer and more humane than we had thought. For other reasons, Rose, Pollock, and Ozment are

equally dubious about the merits of modernity in marriage and the family. Yet for the most part the revisionists' case is not persuasive. Only Auerbach has an adequate sense of the degree to which private life and personal fantasy require the nourishment of public culture. Privacy cannot live on itself, and it is hard to see how a civilized private life can go it alone. Gay's achievement, urbane if it is anything, testifies to the merits of twentieth-century public culture. His book on Victorian sexuality, with its easy and relaxed style, filled with such an abundance of detail and with so little anxiety, could not have been written without the benefits of modernity's attack on Victorian repressiveness. It is an unwitting testimony to the freedoms achieved by the twentieth century in its war against its nineteenth-century past.

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BOOKS

RANSOM AND JARRELL

SELECTED LETTERS OF JOHN CROWE RANSOM. Edited with an Introduction by Thomas Daniel Young and George Core. Louisiana State University Press. \$32.50.

RANDALL JARRELL'S LETTERS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND LITERARY SELECTION. Edited by Mary Jarrell. Houghton Mifflin. \$29.95.

They were never close companions, always master and pupil, distanced. In October 1935 Jarrell wrote from Vanderbilt to Robert Penn Warren—"Dear Red"—who had joined Cleanth Brooks in editing *The Southern Review*:

I've seen Mr. Ransom a good deal—he is engrossed in aesthetics. We rather argue; he wants me to do a thesis on that, but I'm afraid I could hardly make it experimental. I reread Croce and said the original part in Croce (the intuition as expression) was purely psychological, or to use a word he loves, behaviouristic; he gave me a thoughtful look, with doubt, concern, and regret mixed in, and said he had never seen it looked at from that point of view before. I have more fun talking with him than I used to; I like to talk shop, and aesthetics more or less is, politics and freeing the slaves not much.

Ransom found Jarrell pert, intellectually pugnacious, brilliant of course but willing to wound in causes always deemed sufficiently good because they were his. In the summer of 1937, Jarrell and Lowell followed Ransom to Kenyon College, and the talk was resumed, but Ransom was more at ease with Lowell. He wrote to Allen Tate on October 10th:

Randall and Cal are pretty good company; both good fellows in extremely different ways. Randall has gone physical and collegiate with a rush: tennis is the occasion; good for him. Cal is sawing wood and getting out to all his college engagements in businesslike if surly manner; taking Latin and Greek and philosophy and, of course, English; wants to be really educated; and personally is about as gentle and considerate a boy as I've ever dealt with.

Lowell's patrician exactitudes appealed to the Latinate element in Ransom: tennis was fine, but not as fine as Virgil. A year later Ransom told Tate that he was doubtful about Jarrell: "I'm not sure whether he's got a career ahead of him or not." His poems were "almost ruined by his attempt to put into practice Empson's doctrine of ambiguity." A lively teacher "when he's interested," Jarrell asked Ransom if he ever got bored, "and intimated that this was rather his stock condition teaching Freshmen." Ransom was irritated:

A man of his age and ill prospects has no business getting bored by his job. He's returning here one more year.

Ransom may have wanted Tate to tell Jarrell to pull himself together: he must have known that Tate and Jarrell were on lively terms.

Jarrell practiced his pugnacity on Tate and met a master in that style. But there were signs of edginess between them, too. Many years later, when the editorship of *The Kenyon Review* fell vacant, Jarrell's name came up, but Tate advised Ransom against him. Ransom had his own misgivings:

I have said to the old President, and the present one, too, that Jarrell is too polemical and stylistically too journalistic and personally too fond of his enemies (of having enemies) to be acceptable.

But Ransom cared too much for justice to let such a stark record stand:

But right now I'm inclined to think he might be the right man for our unusual situation. His way of life in a small community would make a ruffle, and there would be many incidents, but after (Fred) Santee's stay here I think the town can take anybody; and then I have yet to find in Jarrell a lack of courage or of principle. I've always respected him for the way he will pitch into a question which puts the Jew at a disadvantage; even though he might pass for a Gentile if he kept quiet; and of course for his readiness to fight for unpopular causes, which indeed, being aggressive on principle, he rather enjoys.

In the event, it didn't matter. Jarrell was offered the editorship but

turned it down. He wasn't sufficiently interested in literary criticism to leave a congenial teaching post for its sake.

The letters, like the men, are miles apart. Jarrell enjoyed writing to more forthcoming people than Ransom: he liked being in touch with the magazines, the reviews, sharing lore with Warren, Tate, Lowell, Peter Taylor—his best friend, when all is said—and later with Hannah Arendt, Elizabeth Bishop, and Adrienne Rich. He wrote a wonderful essay on Ransom's poems and construed them as reports from the endless war of authority and love. In return, Ransom wrote an appreciation of Jarrell's work, just and accurate but not lavish. He admired *Pictures from an Institution*, and some of the poems, but he didn't, I think, regard Jarrell as a crucial poet.

Ransom's most engaging letters came at the beginning, especially when he was making notes for a theory of poetry and trying them out on Tate. It is clear that he resented Tate's addiction to T. S. Eliot and took the formal procedures of *The Waste Land* as providing an occasion big enough to make a quarrel. Ransom's head was full of Hardy, and he couldn't or wouldn't let himself hear the music that holds the seemingly discontinuous parts of Eliot's poem sufficiently together. Tate took to those procedures as if he were born to them; though in his own poems he had to wait and work many years before finding an enabling music for his feelings. Blackmur justly said of Tate's *The Winter Sea* that the poetry "is troubled by knowledge that has not quite got into it—or has gotten into the rhythm without having transpired into the words." Many of Tate's poems "have in them a commotion that agitates in obscurity without ever quite articulating through the surface." No reader has ever felt that of Ransom's poems: every commotion that provoked them transpires in the surface and is admitted only on that condition. Tate's early and middle poems sound as if they were not quite ready to be produced and had been sent into the world with their sense of the experiences that incited them still incomplete. Ransom's poems are few because his demand, in the matter of completeness, amounted to a morality, and he was rarely satisfied. He couldn't risk disgracing the Latin and English metres he loved.

In Ransom's early letters to Tate, we see how the notes nudge him beyond the stage of hunches and prejudices toward a full aesthetic theory. The prejudices are already in place. There is the poet's hostility to science, which he expressed in the essay "Classical and Romantic" (1929) and again in "Poetry: A Note in Ontology" (1934):

Science gratifies a rational or practical impulse and exhibits the minimum of perception. Art gratifies a perceptual impulse and exhibits the minimum of reason.

But Ransom meant only to distinguish two attitudes to life, and it matters little that he called them Science and Art. He could have found other names just as readily. The letters also have his sense of art as aesthetic distance; his notion of the literary form, in each genre, as providing a code of manners, on the analogy of the code by which a gentleman courts a lady. The code is not given in the letters as elaborately as in the essay "Forms and Citizens"—it is in *The World's Body* (1938) and again in the splendid selection of Ransom's essays issued a year or so ago¹—but it is sufficiently there in the counsel of delay and indirectness which he advocated in letters to Tate. The gist of it is contained in a letter of April 15, 1924. I assume that Ransom wanted to heal the breach with Tate and to say that *The Waste Land* should not keep them forever apart. Cultivating "the real epistolary amenities," he defended his dualistic theory of poetry, the distinction we know between structure and texture, or between a sturdy argument and the locally enriching details that stop short of hobbling it. As in *The Fugitive*, Tate argued about free verse, and Ransom replied that "the poet must (a)make sense and (b)with the same words make meter."

It is an exhilarating exchange, culminating in a splendid letter of September 5, 1926 which the editors rightly choose to emphasize. Tate elicited from Ransom tones and vivacities far beyond the civic norm of his letters to other friends. In later years, Ransom had a few spirited exchanges with other critics—with Arthur Mizener on Shakespeare's sonnets—but Tate had a particular capacity to provoke him and to drive him beyond his guarded self. When he deprecated Howard Nemerov's laudatory review of *Lolita*, it was to Tate he expressed displeasure—"Nabokov's naughty novel that I had found pretty pointless." To Tate, again, Ransom confided his opinion that Frost had done very useful service by keeping the lower orders diverted:

I felt very sad about Frost, though I didn't go to the funeral. I generally had the curious feeling about him of being indebted to

1. *Selected Essays of John Crowe Ransom*, edited by Thomas Daniel Young and John Hindle. Louisiana State University Press. 1984.

his achievement, in this sense: he was at his best a fine poet, but he chose not to be at his best generally, and therefore discharged the debt to the less literate society which we can't find it in us to take seriously. That's a sort of missionary feeling, with relief that somebody else is doing the job. But in saying this much I don't mean that I have let the question worry me.

Indeed, Ransom was so guarded in his public commentaries that we have to resort to the letters to discover, on many issues, what he felt. Sometimes there is no difference between his public and his private opinion. He always liked Stevens's poetry, including the philosophic poems that Jarrell made fun of—"It is G. E. Moore at the spinet," Jarrell said of a passage from middle-Stevens. Ransom's essay on Stevens, "The Planetary Poet" (1964), is explicit enough. On Eliot, Ransom made reasonably honorable amends, but he wrote nothing in public—not even his beautiful essay on "Gerontion"—as forthcoming as his remark, in a letter of February 1965 to Tate, that he felt "an intense sympathy at last with that tortured soul who achieved serenity." On Hart Crane, Ransom agreed with Tate's high estimate of *White Buildings* (1926), and articulated it at significant length, but in the end he put him down. In September 1967 he wrote again to Tate:

He wrote some beautiful poems, which beside yours lacked starch and substance and the sense of doom. Then he wrote *The Bridge*, where his gift wasn't working but dead. You and Eliot are the unique poets of that period, and your performance was much pithier than his, more memorable; until the greater parts of *Four Quartets*.

There are many other occasions on which the gap between private and public commitment makes all the difference.

The editors of Ransom's letters have done a fine job: their elucidations are just what we want to keep us uncluttered. Only one oddity caught my eye. Ransom referred, in a letter of April 1927, to Fernandez's "judgment." The editors say, in a footnote, that he is probably alluding to Macedonio Fernández (1884–1952), "an Argentinian philosopher, poet, and short-story writer who believed in transcendental subjectivism." It may be true. But in the index the man has become the more familiar Mexican-French critic Ramon Fernandez, who indeed wrote of such issues as the character of intelli-

gence, judgment, and intuition. I think Ramon is the man, unless there is decisive evidence in favor of the Argentinian.

The editing of Jarrell's letters has proceeded, I infer, on a different principle. Mary Jarrell wants the book to stand as autobiographical and literary evidence. Presumably she means to show her husband in the form in which he would have wished to show himself — a man who put some stock in his appearance — if he had written an autobiography. A difficult project, indeed. Ransom's letters are informal accompaniments to the formal thinking he was pursuing at the same time in verse and prose: that is their chief interest. Jarrell's letters are more personal, more a device for keeping in touch with the people he loved and admired. He argued with Lowell, in several letters, about free will and the Catholic doctrine of grace, but the doctrine mattered to him, I think, not at all for its own sake but rather as the theme upon which he engaged Lowell's interest for the time being. There was nothing cynical in Jarrell's recourse to these themes, but I think his interest in them was decently opportunistic. Generally, the letters reveal his daily activities, his enthusiasms, his Proust, Rilke, Mozart, Mahler, Hardy, Auden, his tennis and sports cars and cats. Mary Jarrell has done well to put these circus animals on show.

But the full portrait of her husband, the shape of the evidence she has chosen, is nearly more winning than I can believe. Was he always the golden boy, the F. Scott Fitzgerald of Princeton? Did he never write a letter when he was sullen or dogged or jealous or otherwise nasty? I am much edified by the care Jarrell took to help Lowell revise his poems and to stimulate Adrienne Rich by indicating where, in her poems, she was miming Lowell instead of projecting herself. The only letter I find unpleasant, because the tone is so lavish that I think the speech a diplomat's, is one he wrote to Elizabeth Bishop in April 1957, telling her that he liked her poems better than Marianne Moore's:

I've quite got to like your poems better than Marianne Moore's as much as I do like hers—but life beats art, so to speak, and sense beats eccentricity, and the way things really are beats the most beautiful unreal visions, half-truths, one can fix up by leaving out and indulging oneself. That, too, is just half the truth about her, but I've written the other half at great length and don't need to do it all over again.

No, it won't do. Jarrell couldn't have written the essays on Marianne Moore in *Poetry and the Age* if he took seriously the crude disjunction between life and art, sense and eccentricity, he mailed to Bishop. It is a *gaucherie*. But it is nearly a welcome blemish in an otherwise wartless portrait.

Jarrell's last year was appalling. For months, he was haggard and dazed, no longer the golden boy but a listless middle-aged poet suffering from hepatitis, a sacroiliac injury, and vague distress. He and Mary separated, but she continued to visit him in hospital where doctors tried various elaborate medications without much success. He sank into depression, cut his left wrist in a suicide attempt. Editing these last letters, Mary Jarrell gives in to the cruelty of suggesting that the suicide attempt was caused by a certain reviewer's dismissive commentary, in the *New York Times Book Review*, on her husband's work. The reviewer is not to be blamed for malign coincidence. If Jarrell had been in good health, he would have tossed the review aside. In any case, the wrist didn't heal, and the doctors made arrangements for Jarrell to enter the Hand House of the University of North Carolina Medical School. Three days after he was received there, he went out for an evening walk. On his way back to the Center, he was knocked down by a car and killed. He was fifty-one.

DENIS DONOGHUE

GOING THROUGH THE EMOTIONS

YOUNG HEARTS CRYING. By Richard Yates. Delacorte Press. \$16.95.
LIVES OF THE POETS. By E. L. Doctorow. Random House, Inc. \$14.95.

All the characters in Richard Yates's workaday new novel are mildly cultured and well-bred and absolutely uninterested in anything beyond themselves; all, in fact, are relentlessly social animals with no grander concern than the presentation of self in everyday life. On the surface (which is their spiritual home), they are all artists—after a fashion; at heart, however, they are committed to nothing save self-expression. Theirs is a world in which epiphany is a compliment and tragedy a social gaffe. Sauntering along in limpid, supple prose, *Young Hearts Crying* chaperones these common crea-

tures through a tinkle of cocktail parties and loveless affairs and college friends, through the fifties (when everyone is a would-be artist in Greenwich Village) and the sixties (denoted by psychedelic posters, trips to San Franciscan hippie asylums and an increasing use of “cool” and “groovy”) and the seventies (by the end, mother, father and only daughter independently enter therapy and so, perhaps, achieve their highest goal — being able to talk and talk and talk about themselves). With that, the book ends.

The novel’s protagonist, Michael Davenport, is a featureless, somewhat feckless fellow made frantic by social insecurities — he will never recover from going to Harvard or from marrying a millionairess — and pitifully anxious to prove himself to anyone who will listen. For much of the book, he is little more than a drunken, cantankerous, unstable writer who rails against hippies, proles and faculty people and employs his literary reputation for no greater end than to hustle sweet and slender young girls. Somewhat surprisingly, the novel indulges him in this, and fondly allows him to have his way: Michael sees a deliciously “extraordinary” upper-class English girl at a party, surrounded by five or six supplicants, and within twenty lines is treating her to “the first orgasm of her life.” In the forty pages that follow this improbable conquest, the ill-tempered brute has also succeeded in bedding a girl with “long, bare legs” eight days before her wedding and a secretary who had “never cheated on her boyfriend before” and another pretty young thing who, ooohing and aahing at his poetry, goes so far as to consent to marry him.

Meanwhile, Michael’s first wife Lucy is passing through her own crash course in adult education. As soon as a blue-jeaned kid appears at her New England doorstep to make a phone call, she “already knew she wanted him” (and naturally, this strapping young hunk, equally beloved of most contemporary movies, gives off a gruff simplicity, drives a beat-up old Ford and shaves shirtless at the sink). Hardly has she gone (where else?) to a New School Creative Writing Workshop than (what else?) she falls in love with (who else?) her unprepossessing, brilliant, nerve-wracked teacher. On those occasions when Michael and Lucy share their thoughts during their separation, they say things like, “Know what we did, Lucy? You and me? We spent our whole lives *yearning*. Isn’t that the God damndest thing?”

Satire? I think not. Yates delivers all this material in a well-behaved prose that never laughs or roars or soars or cares to distance itself from the pettiness of its people. Michael rejects Abstract Ex-

pressionism early on, and Yates's language is always cool and clean and clear. It includes a few striking aperçus about the sophistries of social pressure ("one of the small misfortunes of being a rich girl . . . was that people would often exaggerate their pleasure when you gave expensive gifts") and a couple of sensitive observations about people desperately trying to seem unaffected. Yates puts us in the soft spot of his characters' pride and evokes an air of free-floating wistfulness by using "aching" a lot. But the rue in this book is not pointed or particular enough to admit him to Fitzgerald's class. And though the suburban party games in which sozzled Ivy alumni make fools of themselves while questing for a vanished grace sound a little like Cheever, they have none of that writer's silvery radiance. Bouncing along without pressure or reflection, the narrative blandly suggests that all things carry an equal weight. By and large, there is so little pretension here that there seems hardly to be any intention.

A more alarming problem is that Yates handles his unlovely and self-absorbed creations with such indulgent care that he seems not to have forgiven, but merely to have overlooked, their brittleness. In the paragraph introducing Sarah Garvey, who is supposed to be the novel's most saintly character, the narrative rambles on about how every man who meets her instantly begins "helplessly imagining how her body looks naked and how she would feel in their hands, and how she would smell and taste, and how her voice would sound in the delirium of getting laid." In the next paragraph, Michael himself registers his first impression of his second wife—"perfect legs and ankles beneath a straight skirt; a trim little ass with just enough curves to make you ache for it." Four pages after this initial meeting, the two are in a motel room and "it was as if neither he nor Sarah Garvey could be complete unless they were joined." Both the novel and its protagonist seem, in cahoots, to subscribe to a somewhat narrow definition of a full-bodied character.

Ultimately, Yates's novel presents us with soulless lives imitating art. Yes, it is sad that these people are so anxious to be liked, but it would be much sadder if they were actually likable. They are not. Perhaps Yates is consciously trying to demonstrate that everyone is shallow. But shallowness for 347 pages is itself trying. And are people really so pallid and full of self-pity? Is life truly so barren of grace and surprise? Is contemporary America honestly no more alive than an Alan Alda movie? As a tough but (of course) sensitive truck-driverly man (!) in her creative writing class tells Lucy about her story, "All I'm trying to say is that I'm afraid I got a kind of who-cares feeling out of this."

There seems at first to be something more, and something more mysterious, taking place in E. L. Doctorow's latest book of stories. The first six sketches in this fashionably thin volume (145 pages with broad margins and two or three blank pages between sections) are all writerly two-finger exercises, but they move swiftly, arrestingly, through the haunted streets of lightless, dateless mill towns sometime in the past. One flips through them as through some musty daguerrotypes in an album; the tales have the unworldly immediacy of snapshots from a dream. As *Ragtime* proved, Doctorow can tell an arresting story; his phrases grab one by the lapel, and he usually moves well on his rhythmical feet. These sketches seem no more than practice pieces, excuses for Doctorow to take his reader for an evocative ride, but they are not without a few nice touches: picture-perfect descriptions of the way schoolgirls lick ice-cream cones, say, or how "a weird light lay over everything, as if the sun, fallen from the sky, had broken into leaves."

That is not to say that Doctorow sustains his prose infallibly. In the story "Willi," for example, he commits the following phrases within the space of four narrow pages: "I imagined the earth's soul lifting to the warmth of the sun and mingling me in some divine embrace"; (upon seeing, as a boy, his mother making love to his tutor in a barn), "How can I describe what I felt! I felt I deserved to see this! . . . I wanted to kill him, this killer of my mother who was killing her . . . I wanted to be him"; "If memory is a matter of the stimulation of so many cells of the brain, the greater the stimulus—remorse, the recognition of fate—the more powerfully complete becomes the sensation of the memory until there is transfer, as in a time machine, and the memory is in the ontological sense another reality." Then, four pages later, at the conclusion of this vividly unexceptional tale of walking in the fields and romping in the hay, the narrator declares, suddenly and out of nowhere, "This was in Galicia in the year 1910. All of it was to be destroyed anyway, even without me." The ending is indeed deeply disquieting, but not, I think, in the way intended. For it makes the mundane story seem like a wind-up gadget, equipped with a cheap little device designed to invest it, retroactively, with a power that the narrative itself has failed to earn. Could one not append this line to any story as a shortcut to resonance and poignancy?

That same strain of trickery informs the structure of the volume as a whole; having collected six miscellaneous doodles, Doctorow artificially connects, and apparently hopes to transform, them by appending a long concluding piece that purports to be the story of the

man who wrote the other stories. Thus life and art, on paper at least, become parallel texts; thus the last story sheds light on the first six, and vice versa. This clever gimmick is, of course, wasted on any reader who has no intention of rereading the pieces in the pale fire-light of the delayed revelation. It also seems like a piece of legerdemain dreamed up after the fact to make the impact of the sketches somehow greater than the sum of their parts.

The most worrisome problem of all, however, is that this final novella, which occupies half of the volume, takes us back into the busy hands and idle mind of a middle-aged writer heavy with self-pity, lustful and lonely and, for all his earnest ruminations, committed to somewhat unremarkable pursuits ("I'm fairly sure I can summon any one of a half-dozen women who on little or no notice will be delighted to spend the night with me. That's a modest estimate. They will get in their cars, fly in from other cities.") When this character is not, quite literally, analyzing his scrotum, he is going through the with-it, well-educated and thoroughly hollow motions of a Greenwich Village trendy showing a visitor round all things chic or *de rigueur*—the stream of his consciousness babbles past all the familiar topics of a Manhattan dinner party: roaches, doormen, muggers, graffiti, the subway and, *en passant*, New Age salons, Caribbean trips, Club Med Zen retreats and—inescapably—analysts. In the course of this guided tour around the penthouses of the glitterati, we are introduced to Freddie who "spends his days now trying to live down his Pulitzer in fiction," and in the grand show-stopping finale, we are invited to a publishing party at the Dakota where we catch glimpses of "Norman and Kurt, Joyce . . . Bill and Rose," and even, inexplicably, Boy George. The loftiest thing in the entire story are its Soho apartments.

Connecting this surface-thin metropolite with the shadowed beat of the earlier stories does not seem a profitable exercise. More distressingly, however, the final story reads like a self-addressed greeting-card: not only does Doctorow confer upon his narrative persona his own alma mater, age, profession and hometown, but he also, like Yates, makes no attempt to dissociate himself from this charmless and superficial lecher. Most of all, he does not bother to put into perspective such opinions of his mouthpiece as "But of course, happiness is intolerable for more than two seconds" or "I want to be who I really am with everyone, all the time." Either this is authorial compassion—to a fault—or it is something worse.

At the end, Doctorow tries to dignify his meanderings by add-

ing to the strand of voyeurism his hallmark theme (the flood of immigrants here to partake of American promise). But this comes too late to redeem a willfully aimless journal that seems closer to the inconsequential jottings of *Overdrive* than to the sinuous, mesmeric, unsettling cadences of, for example, *Pitch Dark*. *Lives of the Poets* suggests the work of a professional story-teller so eager to be something more than he fashions a world without creating a vision.

PICO IYER

ECONOMICS AS FATE

CIVILIZATION AND CAPITALISM: 15th-18th CENTURY. VOLUME III. THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD. By Fernand Braudel. Translated by Sian Reynolds. Harper and Row. \$35.00.

The French cultural scene of late has been rather barren. The major *maîtres à penser* who dominated the thirties and the post-war years are almost all gone, and they have had no successor. There are no philosophers or novelists who can stand comparison with their predecessors. I can think of only one area of exception to this dismal picture: semiotics and historiography.

Fernand Braudel's concluding volume of his trilogy, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Century*, can serve as a convenient peg on which to hang some general reflections on the special place that French historiography presently occupies.

The ascendancy of history on the cultural landscape has some of its roots in the prewar period but has become more pronounced since after the war. It may be said to have started in 1929 when two eminent young historians, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, founded the now famous *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. Given the centralization of intellectual life in Paris, it is noteworthy that both these men taught in the provincial university of Strasbourg. But it was surely not only their academic location that distinguished the editors and contributors of the *Annales* from their colleagues. While traditional history, at the Sorbonne as elsewhere, concentrated on narrative history providing chronologically ordered accounts of, say, diplomatic history, the *Annales* writers shunned "event history" and wanted to stress long-term trends (*longue durée*) or medium-term

history (conjecture). They wished to establish close collaboration with other social sciences, such as human geography, economics, Durkheimian sociology, demography, and ethnography. They may not have seen history as the queen of the social sciences, but they certainly believed that a history revitalized by contact with other social sciences would soon occupy a central position on the intellectual firmament.

Bloch, whose *Feudal Society*, published before the war, is still considered the standard work, emphasized the affinities of history with human geography and economics. His senior colleague at Strasbourg, Lucien Febvre, was more particularly interested in the historical study of "mentalities," that is, shared mental perspectives. Bloch, even though he could have left France, remained there and became an active member of the Resistance movement. He was killed by the Nazis shortly before the liberation. Febvre survived and became one of the major luminaries of French history after the war.

After Febvre's death in 1956, the author of the present volume, Fernand Braudel, became the leading spirit in the *Annales* school. Though he has stressed that he considers himself the successor of both leading *Annales* historians, his work is in many ways closer to Bloch's approach than to that of Febvre. While the latter contributed in a major way to intellectual history and the study of ideas, (*vide* his magisterial books on Rabelais and Luther), Bloch continued throughout his work to concentrate attention on economic and geographical factors. The work of Braudel stands mostly under his shadow. Braudel shows only a minimal interest in currents of ideas. He largely focuses on economic and geographical factors which, so he alleged, fashion the course of history, be it in the medium run or in the long term.

Born in 1902, Braudel still dominates the contemporary historical establishment. His work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, is generally seen by historians as a masterpiece. It consists largely of a detailed discussion of the social environment in the Mediterranean world which shaped the various civilizations that intersected in that geographical region. The book also provides fascinating accounts of the many ways in which the geographical environment favored or blocked the economic infrastructure of the region, and it deals with events such as the crucial navy battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, which spelled the end of the Turkish ascendancy in the Mediterranean and assured the dominance of the Spaniards and their Italian allies for a long period.

Even though Braudel devotes 400 pages to part III of the book, entitled "Events, Politics and People," the first 900 pages are devoted to sections dealing with "The Role of the Environment" and "Collective Destinies and General Trends."

The tendency to underplay events and overplay longer or medium trends is even more pronounced in Braudel's late masterpiece, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th to 18th Century*, of which the volume under review is the concluding part. The two other volumes, *The Structure of Everyday Life* and *The Wheels of Commerce*, were published in the splendid translation of Sian Reynolds a few years earlier. In this trilogy, events are hardly touched upon. For example, in the present volume which encompasses the Reformation, the index has one entry for Luther and none for Calvin. E. P. Thompson, the great British Marxist historian, wrote once that, after all, "history is about chaps." This is surely not Braudel's history. Not that he deals with history as a Marxist; in fact, I doubt that Marx was as much of an economic determinist as Braudel. Marx would hardly have insisted that "... the economic history of the world is the entire history of the world seen from a certain vantage point—that of the economy." Even when Braudel immediately qualifies this statement by saying that he is aware that "one cannot with immunity give precedence to the series of phenomena known as 'economic'," he nevertheless affirms and reaffirms throughout these pages a very accentuated economic determinism.

The first volume of his trilogy deals with markets, shops, fairs, trade routes and networks of exchange. The second is mainly devoted to a meticulous tracing of trade channels within Europe and beyond. The present concluding volume continues to stress the central importance of national and international channels of exchange, and it is largely devoted to describing the major hubs of these exchange transactions. Far from sharing Marx's view that monopolization only characterizes a late stage in the development of capitalism, Braudel stresses to the contrary that monopolization has been central for capitalism since its inception. The capitalist history of Europe, he argues, can best be understood in terms of successive dominance of central hubs of finance and commerce, first in Venice with its long near monopoly over trade with the East, later by Antwerp, and finally by Amsterdam. For a relatively short period, Braudel argues, dominance shifted from Antwerp to Genoa, which was closely connected to the Spanish crown. The precious metal that the Spanish *conquistadores* shipped from the Americas to Spain, was

then marketed through Genoa, which helped exchanges of Spanish-American bullion against the pepper of the East. But when the Spanish crown went into bankruptcy in 1627, Genoa was again pushed into a peripheral position in the world economy, and Amsterdam became the central hub. The final stage in this book deals with the ascendancy of Britain in the eighteenth century. Braudel sees this event as a central watershed in the history of the world, since it was the first time that a national economy rather than a port city dominated world trade.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the enormous scope of this work. In addition to the history of European hubs of commerce, Braudel also devotes separate and illuminating chapters to the economies of Russia, Black Africa, the Turkish Empire, the Far East, and, of course, the Americas. Sometimes a single phrase sets one's mind to work, as when Braudel writes, "The Great Indies companies were the multinationals of their age."

While it would be most ungracious not to recognize Braudel's splendid contributions to the history of the world economy before the Industrial Revolution, I yet cannot help but feel that his economic determinism fails to sensitize him to those factors in history that are not dominated, to put this into Weberian categories, by material interests and can better be understood by close attention to ideal interests, or by those changes in the mentality of people that Lucien Febvre attempted to analyze. The *Annales* school is thriving today, but it has attained its dominant rank by stressing that changes in mentality may be as central in the understanding of history as the price of wheat or the last quotation of bullion at the Genoa exchange. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's work is more representative of current *Annales* concerns than Braudel's.

It is perhaps not wholly accidental that Braudel and his school gained hegemony in French history after the war. As France was displaced from its central position in the world of ideas, many of her intellectuals seem attracted to a view of history that underplays willful social action and accentuates a feeling of collective impotence in a world that seems no longer to respond to human initiative. As John Leonard wrote about the first volume of this work, Braudel has demonstrated that "most history is written on the back of most people." The fact is that such a view of men and women seems congenial to many Europeans today. But there also have been more optimistic periods when it was stressed that people make their history, though not as they please. Such periods may become the breeding ground of

a new historiography that does not consider human beings as only the playthings of economic circumstance.

LEWIS COSER

LÉVI-STRAUSSIANA

THE VIEW FROM AFAR By Claude Lévi-Strauss. Translated by Joachim Neucroschel and Phoebe Hoss. Basic Books Inc. \$24.95.

Whatever they may declare in public places, devotees of Lévi-Straussian structuralism are not going to feel happy about this book. The form is similar to that of *Structural Anthropology* (1963) and *Structural Anthropology*, Volume II (1976), but whereas these earlier symposia contained many of the foundation texts of the author's very personal style of anthropological analysis, the essays in the present collection have no obvious merit other than that they are "a gathering of scattered and hard to find writings." The claim that the book "has the pace of a short treatise on anthropology or of an introduction to this discipline, whose main aspects are largely represented" is in no way born out by what follows, but the diversity of materials makes reviewing difficult. My comments will be selective and arbitrary.

There are twenty-three items in all; one first appeared in 1956; one was previously unpublished; all the rest are post-1970.

It is a very bad-tempered and egocentric book. There is scarcely any reference to the post-1962 proliferation of "structuralist" thinking in such fields as literary criticism, art history, classical studies, and general semiotics. But although Lévi-Strauss ignores most of his admirers, he finds time to abuse his supposed enemies. For example, he denounces the work of "our English-language colleagues as they repudiate all the achievements of our discipline, revile its founders and the scholars who succeeded them, and insist that it is necessary to 'rethink' anthropology from top to bottom, that nothing from its past remains valid. This rancor has been vented by turns on Frazer, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and several other anthropologists . . ."

This particular passage is a jibe against myself (it refers to lectures I delivered in 1958 and 1976 and to an essay published in 1965), but the author's main purpose is to assert that, notwithstand-

ing the accumulation of empirical evidence to the contrary, his long ago speculations concerning the marriage practices of certain groups of Australian aborigenes are still to be preferred to the arguments of his critics because the latter are “condemned by current conditions to know only aboriginal groups whose traditional culture has greatly deteriorated . . .”

That word “deteriorated” needs to be noted. The imaginary human beings who provide the subject matter for Lévi-Strauss’s anthropological analyses live in a never-never land, a utopian paradise, a golden age. He views them from afar through the wrong end of a telescope. At that distance they seem to dance out the patterns required by his theories; when real people are seen at close range they do not behave like that. So their culture must be debased.

This is a very standard type of Lévi-Straussian argument. When originally devised back in the 1940s, his theories seemed to fit reasonably well with the very crude ethnographic records available prior to 1914, i.e., prior to the development of “modern” techniques of anthropological field research. Generally speaking, his theories fit very badly with the empirical data of later field research. This awkward fact is repeatedly explained by Lévi-Strauss asserting that the “traditional” culture of primitive peoples was entirely different from the contemporary culture of their descendants. Therefore we can ignore the empirical findings of recent field research because it relates only to modern contemporary culture.

Because these “traditional cultures” (considered to exist in the plural) were altogether different from Western industrial culture, we can look at them only “from afar.” But his title has other facets. The author is looking back from afar at his own anthropological past. The conservatism with which he performs this feat is unqualified. He saw the light sometime around 1945, and he has never subsequently deviated from the truth, but all who came after him have erred and strayed like lost sheep.

If you were to believe the argument of these essays, Lévi-Strauss has never made a serious mistake. In chapter 18 he admits to having committed an error in a Canadian broadcast talk made in 1978 and subsequently published: “I made a slip of the tongue (substituting Hagen for Gunther) which destroyed my whole line of reasoning.” But this doesn’t worry him in the least; it takes him only four pages to reconstruct the original argument on the basis of precisely reversed empirical facts.

Personally I found the original version (based on false data) neat and convincing; the new version (based on accurate data) is simply special pleading and does not convince me at all.

This exemplifies another general difficulty about these essays; many of them are explicit commentaries on some other essay either by Lévi-Strauss himself or by another author, so that it is often difficult to understand what the argument is all about. Thus chapter 1, "Race and Culture" (1971), is an ingeniously transformed version of the conclusion of *Race et Histoire* (1952) which thereby becomes an attack on the contemporary platitudes of UNESCO's purported "struggle against racism." But unless one looks up the original version it is easy to miss the point.

Comparably, chapter 8, originally printed in Lévi-Strauss's anthropological journal *L'Homme*, consists of a highly polemical attack on an article by Marvin Harris which was itself designed to be offensive and was originally published in French in the same issue of *L'Homme*. Harris subsequently published an English version in his book *Cultural Materialism* (1979). Read side by side, both essays, in their respective styles, seem to me to be equally silly examples of pedantic nitpicking, but taken in isolation without access to the counterargument, both become almost meaningless.

The essays that I like best in the present collection come at the end in a section entitled "Constraint and Freedom." Here at last our author can feel relaxed; he is not defending himself against the imagined hostility of his professional colleagues or defending an impossible and long outdated intellectual position against all comers. He can stop bothering about what is or is not the proper subject matter of anthropology.

These items include two essays about artists (Max Ernst and Anita Albus) which show up the kinship between Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and surrealist painting; an essay about how he remembers New York as it was in 1941; an odd piece about the education of creative children; and an essay entitled "Reflections on Liberty," which uses the recent high-level political debates about human rights as an excuse for reflecting once more on the French ideas of liberty that were advocated by Montesquieu and Rousseau and a supposed contrast with prototypical English views on the same theme. It is nothing very profound, but the essay manages to point up a number of the key issues in the contemporary debate in a civilized and penetrating fashion.

Renato Rosaldo, an anthropologist whom I greatly respect, writes enthusiastically on the back cover, but I find myself unable to join in the applause.

EDMUND LEACH

THE LUXURIES OF DETAIL

WHAT THE LIGHT WAS LIKE. By Amy Clampitt. Alfred A. Knopf. \$14.95.

BLESSING. By Christopher Jane Corkery. Princeton University Press. \$13.95.

There is no point in introducing Amy Clampitt here. Her rapid ascendancy and success, after years of neglect, have passed into literary folklore, and her first book, *The Kingfisher*, has the status of a modern masterpiece. It is axiomatic, of course, that the follow-up work will be received less enthusiastically—sudden acclaim invariably puts the writer in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation. To continue in the original vein is to be resting on laurels; to depart is to betray the gift. Clampitt, in *What the Light Was Like*, plays shrewdly down the middle, neither quite repeating nor betraying. If the result is not as striking as *The Kingfisher*, it's less because her performance has fallen off, more because her idiom has revealed its intrinsic limitations.

With *The Kingfisher*, Clampitt injected a much-needed serum of the baroque into the bloodstream of English-language poetry. Indeed, so starved were readers for her kind of verbal richness and stylization—who can explain what a public craves at any given time?—that sins of excess were either overlooked or forgiven. And there were excesses, grand cadenzas of ornamental description that almost completely buried the object or event in question. Aware of her tendency, Clampitt cleverly looked for subjects that would let profusion appear appropriate. In “Botanical Nomenclature,” for instance, she wrote of:

foliage
blued to a driftwood patina
growing outward, sometimes to the

size of a cathedral window,
 stemrib grissaille edge-tasseled
 with opening goblets, with bugles
 in miniature, mauve through cerulean,
 toggled into a seawall scree,

and so on. Her enterprise was only in part concerned with perception or even sense. It was also determinedly intent upon overturning the dictatorship of unemphatic plainness. Heeding the law of compensation, she threw herself in the opposite direction—at times, it seemed, choosing words for their strangeness more than their utility. Still, her civilized bombardiering was widely applauded.

What The Light Was Like is divided into five sections, all of which can be seen in relation. “The Shore,” “The Hinterland” and “The Metropolis” are geographical panels; “Voyages: A Homage To John Keats” and “Written In Water” bear an obvious titular connection. But the sense of wholeness comes retrospectively: every section in some way meditates on death, art, and the mysterious relation between the human spirit and the natural elements which house it and compose its habitat. “The thinnest of osmotic boundaries contain what once/was called the soul,” writes Clampitt in “A Curfew.” This awareness pervades the poetry and underwrites the astonishing precision of many of her lines.

As in *The Kingfisher*, Clampitt is at her best—and also at her most inflated—when describing the natural world. *What the Light Was Like* is an archive of magical detailings. Eiders trail “a knit-and-purl of irresistibly downy young behind them”; a warbler is “dapper in a yellow domino/a noose of dark about his throat”; a gooseberry is flavored with “the acerbity of all things green/and adolescent”. . . . But then, right alongside these perfect registrations, are passages where the verbiage is so disproportionate to its subject that baroque degenerates into rococo: “Mulleins hunker to a hirsute/rosette about the taproot.” Though Clampitt can render the slightest quiver within the natural order, she can also cause us to lose sight of that order completely.

“Voyages: A Homage To John Keats” consists of eight long biographical poems. Helen Vendler (to whom the section is dedicated) once praised the “Keatsian luxury of detail” in Clampitt’s writing. The affinity between poets is worthy of remark. It also explains, I think, why this sequence—the most ambitious in the collection—is so disquieting. The poetry itself is as exquisitely nuanced as

anything by Clampitt. The problem is that the sensibility of Keats, the ostensible subject of the section, never acquires an independent resonance. Dozens of ingenious echoes and appropriations stand in the way:

how beautiful
the season was—ay, better than
the chilly green of spring, the warmed hue
of grainfields' harsh stubs turned pictorial
with equinoctial bloom, the tincture of
the actual, the mellow aftermath of fever:
purgatorial winnowings, the harvest over.

The representative passage, from “Winchester: The Autumn Equinox,” is a skillful tatting of the relevant description from Keats’s letter to J. H. Reynolds and key signals from the poem itself; “ay,” “mellow,” “winnowings”. . . . But Clampitt has neither carried us further into the Keatsian sensibility, nor improved upon the poetry.

Cavils aside, there is much to celebrate in Clampitt’s book. The landscape sections give an evocative thrill, and the long poems on the death of her brother and, in the title poem, of an old lobsterman, are heartfelt and strong. Strong, too, is “Black Buttercups,” Clampitt’s farewell to a childhood house and to childhood itself:

I remember waking,
a February morning leprous with frost
above the dregs of a halfhearted snowfall,
to find the gray world of adulthood
everywhere, as though there never
had been any other, in that same house
I could not bear to leave, where even now
the child who wept to leave still sits
weeping at the thought of exile.

All adornment has been sloughed off; mood and setting have come together like the two images in a viewfinder. The lines suggest that Clampitt could move away from the baroque without surrendering her special power.

I have not the space to offer anything but the most general praise for Christopher Jane Corkery’s first collection, *Blessing*. Unlike Clampitt, Corkery eschews decoration and curbs every impulse to pure style. What these poems offer is an obdurate vision of

grace, a careful sounding of human circumstance that omits nothing of its dreads and despairs, but which nonetheless manages to find under just what conditions beauty and redemption are granted. This is one of the most honestly made and least assuming first books I have encountered. Corkery is difficult to excerpt, for her poems are carefully woven wholes. Here, nevertheless, is the opening passage from "Letter from Marcellus, Maker of Fountains, to Cominia His Mother":

. . . Yes, I understand quite well. Within
two days the Senate's edict will be out,
my fountains tightly gagged. The central cistern
will be rimmed by crowds who wait in lines for what
they thought was theirs. They'll think they only mind
the wait. They will not know it is the absence
of the leap enfeebles them and queers their dreams
at night. The surge the spirit needs to live
is gone without the fountains.

With little adjustment these words can be said to describe the place of poetry in our or any culture.

SVEN BIRKERTS

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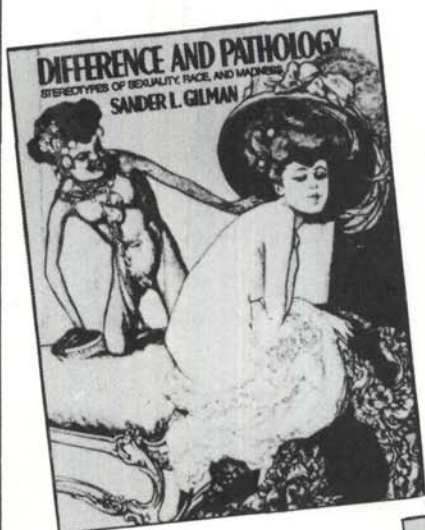
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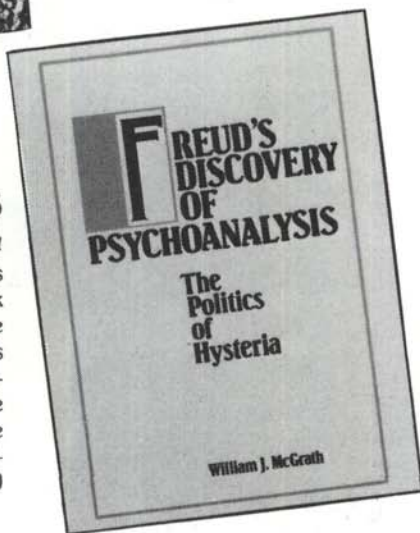
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